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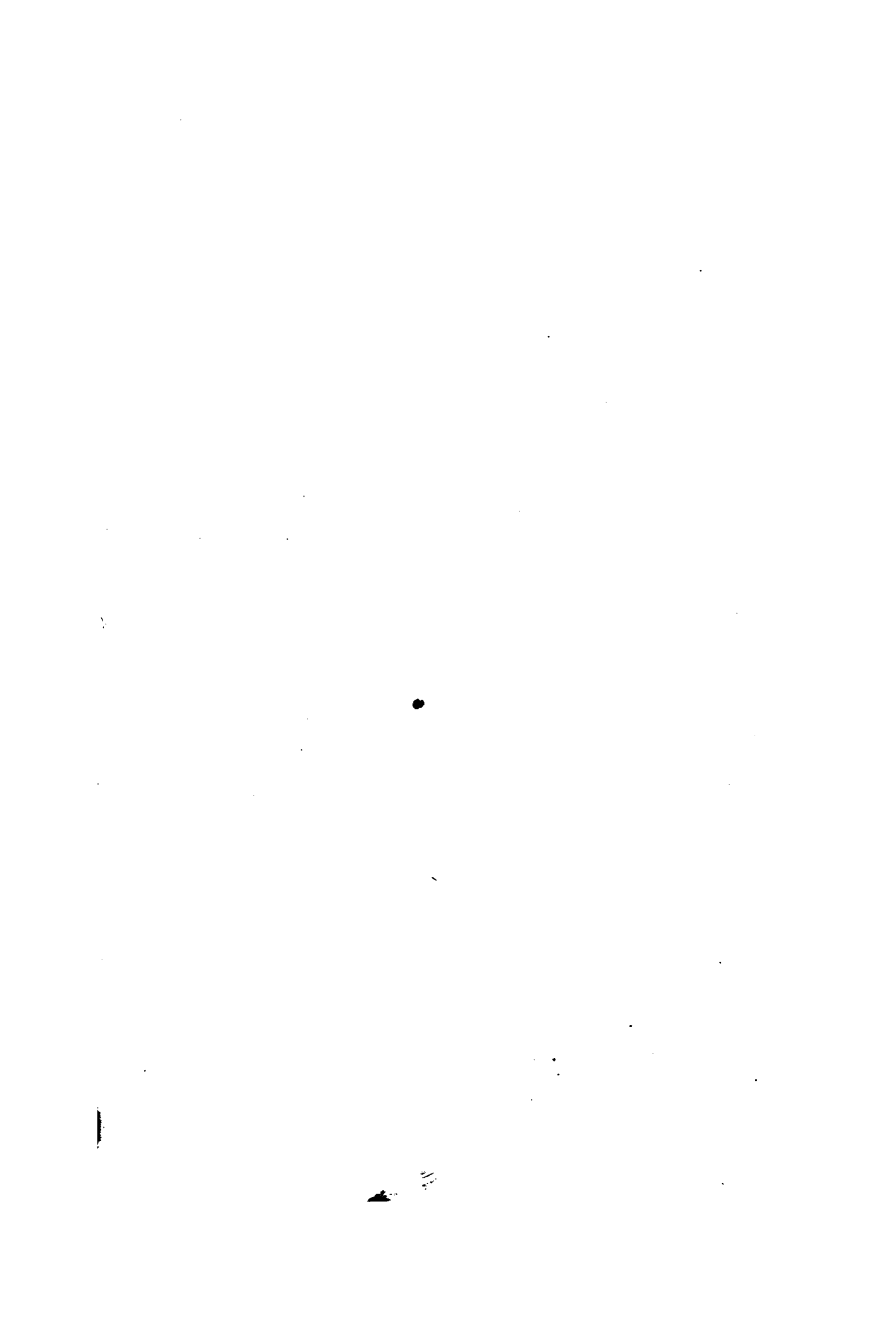
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VOL. 3867.

BROTHERS.

BY

HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL.

IN TWO VOLUMES. — VOL. I.

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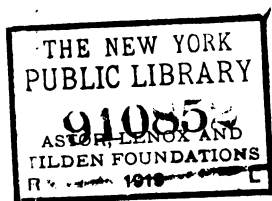
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BROTHERS. BY HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



BROTHERS
THE TRUE HISTORY OF A FIGHT
AGAINST ODDS

BY
HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

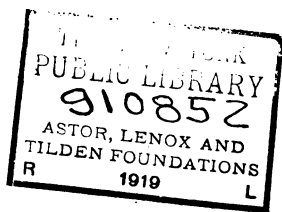
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IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

LEIPZIG
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1906.



TO ALL MEN AND WOMEN
WHO HAVE STRIVEN:
TO THE STRONG
WHO HAVE ATTAINED THEIR GOAL,
TO THE WEAK
WHO HAVE MADE THE RUNNING FOR THE STRONG,
AND IN PARTICULAR TO THOSE
WHO HAVE CONFRONTED ILL-FORTUNE, ILL-HEALTH,
AND DISAPPOINTMENT
WITH FORTITUDE AND SERENITY
I DEDICATE THIS
BOOK.



PREFATORY NOTE.

It is likely that the brothers in this book will be recognised by some readers who may indict the good taste of revealing a secret guarded jealously during many years. To these let it be said that the brother who attained to the highest honours and dignities of his profession earnestly desired that the truth concerning certain incidents in his earlier career should be told in a biography. A desire he was constrained reluctantly to forego. The story of the Samphires satisfies adequately enough the exigencies of a peculiar case. The many are not concerned; the few will discern truth through the thin veil of fiction.

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B R O T H E R S.

PROLOGUE.

MARK SAMPHIRE clutched tightly his mother's hand, as the big room began to fill with people. Some he knew, and these he feared: because they might speak to him, and then he would stammer, and choke, and make a piteous spectacle of himself. He wished that he were his brother, Archibald, standing on the other side of his mother, Archie, the pink-skinned and golden-haired, a tremendous fellow clad in a new sailor suit, and tolerably self-possessed, but pinker than usual, because a lady in lavender silk had hugged him and called him "a darling." Nobody called Mark a darling except his mother, and that only when they were alone. The fat butler kept shouting out more names. Mrs. Corrance and Jim arrived. Mark hoped that they would sit near him. Jim was his own age—a ripe seven—and a sworn friend. Lord Randolph talked to Admiral Kirtling, the funny man who made

everybody laugh. Ah! Jim had pushed his way through the crowd. In a minute the two boys were whispering together, nineteen to the dozen, for Mark seldom stammered when he talked to Jim.

An older person than Mark would have seen on the faces of the assembled company an air of expectation. Big folding-doors, now shut, divided the drawing-room from the library. Upon these the eyes of the women lingered, for behind them stood mystery and, so it was reported, beauty! Meantime they chattered, talking for the most part about the house, newly built, and well named The Whim. Miss Selina Lamb, one of the Lambs from Cranberry-Orcas, who had so many relations that she was never out of half-mourning, gave information to the Dean of Westchester.

"I assure you, Mr. Dean, that it is a fact. The dear Admiral got into a fly at Westchester—he carried nothing but a white umbrella, and told the man, Thomas Pinnick, who has driven me a score of times, to take him to 'some salubrious locality.' Thomas, quite properly, drove him here across the downs. The west wind was blowing strongly, and the dear man thought he was in the chops—it is chops, isn't it?—yes, in the chops of the Channel. He gave Thomas Pinnick a sovereign, and bought this hill within the week. Now he has built this remarkable house."

The Dean smiled, admitting that the house might be described as remarkable. Bedrooms covered the ground floor; above these the sitting-rooms commanded a fine view of the pastoral county of Slowshire; at the top of the house were the kitchen and servants' offices!

"I understand," said Mr. Dean, "that food descends like manna from above, and that the common odours of leek and cabbage ascend, and are smelled of none, save perhaps the skylarks."

"You always put things so poetically," murmured Miss Lamb. "Yes, you are right. The still-room is just above the library."

"Where it should be, my dear Miss Lamb. I hope the Admiral's housekeeper wears list slippers."

Miss Lamb, sensible that the Dean was making a joke which she could not quite understand, smiled, showing large even teeth, and asked if Mr. Dean had ever met the young lady in whose honour they had gathered together. Mr. Dean had not met the young lady, but he had known, intimately, her mother. Miss Lamb blushed.

"She was charming," murmured the Dean absently, "the most fascinating creature."

The spinster sniffed her surprise, reflecting that her companion was a radical. A true blue, the bishop,

for instance, would not have mentioned the mother at all. She felt it her duty to bleat a feeble protest.

"She behaved so shockingly, Mr. Dean."

"True, true, but she was very young, Miss Lamb. Poor, pretty creature! And now—dead!"

Miss Lamb closed her thin lips, and her large, too prominent, china-blue eyes settled upon a portrait just opposite: the portrait of Colonel Kirtling, the Admiral's elder brother, the father of the mystery behind the folding doors, and the husband of the pretty creature who had behaved so shockingly. The picture, painted by Richmond, was not unlike the famous portrait of Lord Byron. Colonel Fred Kirtling had been one of the handsomest men in the Guards. Richmond reproduced his curling auburn hair, his short upper lip, his finely modelled nose, his round chin with a distracting (the adjective was Lady Blessington's) dimple in it, and his "wicked" (Lady B. again) eyes.

"Did you know Colonel Kirtling, Mr. Dean?"

"Yes. A sad scamp, Miss Lamb, a scamp when he married at sixty!"

He began to speak of the Kirtling family. Admiral Kirtling was the fourth son of the sixteenth Lord Kirtling, of Kirtling, in the county of Cumberland, who married a Penberthy from Cornwall, an heiress with a large fortune settled upon herself and her children.

The seventeenth lord inherited whatever his sire had been unable to sell: Kirtling heavily mortgaged and stripped of its huge leaden roof (gambled away at hazard) and the wild moors which encompass it. This nobleman lived and died in chronic resentment against the poverty his father had inflicted upon him. His brother succeeded, and was the father of a young gentleman whom we shall meet by-and-by. Fred, the third brother, who had a royal duke for a godfather, married Louise de Courcy, a beauty with French blood in her veins. It is certain that she married Fred for love and against the wishes of her parents; and it is equally certain that she left him, just four years afterwards, because she loved somebody else much better. This somebody, who happened to be a peer and a famous soldier, offered Fred such satisfaction as one gentleman, even in those latter days, might tender an injured husband. Fred, however, wrote in reply that he was under an obligation to his lordship for taking off his hands the most ungrateful hussy in the kingdom. Fred's word, be it added, was little better than his bond (the children of Israel knew that to be worthless); and it is significant that Mrs. Kirtling's family, both French and Irish, abused Fred to all-comers: asserting that he had deceived dozens of women in his time, and none more cruelly than his charming wife. Death shut the mouths of the gossips by carrying off both Fred

and Louise within six months of the latter's elopement.

By this time the Admiral, a bachelor of some eccentricity, had just settled into his new house at King's Charteris, near Westchester, and was known to be averse to leaving it. Yet he had to answer the question: "Who will take care of Fred's baby?" Lady Randolph, a kinswoman, was called into council.

"Children are the devil," said the Admiral gloomily. "Think of my nymphs." (He had some beautiful china).

"This one may prove the prettiest of them all," said Lady Randolph.

"Yes, yes; father and mother the handsomest couple, even if forty years were between 'em. Well, well, I lean on you, dear lady."

Lady Randolph did not fail him. She fetched the child from town, gave the nurse, an impudent town minx, twenty-four hours' notice, and installed in her place a respectable girl, Esther Gear, out of her own village of Birr Wood.

So much, and little more, was known to the company assembled in the Admiral's drawing-room.

Presently the big folding-doors were flung open, and Lady Randolph passed through, leading by the hand little Elizabeth Kirtling. A buzz of admiration greeted Betty. She wore a delicate India muslin frock, encircled

by a rose-coloured sash. Rose-coloured shoes embellished her tiny feet, and a knot of the same coloured riband glowed in her dark curls, which framed an oval face. The Admiral had told Esther Gear that he would tolerate no black, which came, he said, into people's lives soon enough. Round her neck was a string of coral beads which matched the tints of her cheeks. Her great hazel eyes shone demurely beneath their thick black lashes, and when she smiled her lips parted, revealing a fairy's set of teeth between two dimples. The Admiral met his niece on the threshold of the room, took her hand, and patted it softly. Then he led her forward. The finely proportioned saloon, filled with rare and beautiful things, the silver light of an October afternoon, the many faces—young and old alike touched and interested—served as a setting for the grizzled veteran, with his whimsical weather-beaten face seamed by a thousand lines, and the diminutive creature at his side. Mrs. Samphire let two tears trickle unheeded down her thin cheeks, but her pretty mouth was smiling. Mark felt that his mother's grasp had tightened. Perhaps she foresaw, poor lady, that the time appointed for her to leave her sons was near at hand. Mark stared hard at the little girl as if indeed, as was true, he had never seen her like.

Now it seems that the Admiral had told his niece, with a twinkle in his kind eyes, that the drawing-room

was her room: the state apartment of the only lady of his house. And so, when Betty looked up and saw many strange faces about her she recalled an adjective too often in her father's mouth, and said clearly and loudly: "Uncle, what are all dese dam peoples doing in my room?"

When the laughter died down, the Admiral said with his queer chuckle: "Egad! this is a maid of surprises;" but he was careful to explain to his niece that his friends were her friends, to be honoured and loved by her. The child's mouth puckered, and her great eyes were troubled.

"I can't love all dese peoples," she protested, on the edge of tears. The Admiral laughed.

"You must pick and choose, Betty. 'Tis the privilege of your sex. Come now, who pleases you best?"

She understood perfectly: examining the company with dignified curiosity. Finally, her eyes rested upon the three boys at Mrs. Samphire's side.

"I like them boys," she said clearly.

The three boys were confused but charmed.

"She likes the boys, the coquette!" exclaimed the Admiral. "And which of the three, missie, do you like best?"

The boys blushed because the company stared at them. Archie, the handsome one, stood nearest to little Betty, and seeing her hesitation held out his hands;

Jim Corrance smiled invitingly; Mark, the stammerer, attempted no lure, dismally conscious that he could not compete against the others, but his forget-me-not blue eyes, the only fine feature he possessed, suffused a soft radiance.

"I love him!" cried Betty, running forward. She passed Archie and Jim, flinging her arms round Mark's neck, who bashfully returned her eager kisses.

"Um!" said the Admiral, half smiling, half frowning, "as I remarked just now, here is a Maid of Surprises."

"And the Lord God said unto the serpent . . . I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."—*Genesis III, 15.*

"And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence of the fulness of days?"—*Abt Vogler, Browning.*

CHAPTER I.

BUBBLE AND SQUEAK.

THIS is the history of a fighter, a fighter against odds, whose weapons were forged at Harrow-on-the-Hill. Afterwards, in Mark Samphire's eyes, all school buildings, even the humblest, had a certain sanctity, because they are strewn with precious dust, the *pulverem Olympicum*, so pungent to the nostrils of a combatant. To him, for instance, the ancient Fourth Form Room at Harrow was no battered mausoleum of dead names, but a glorious Campus Martius, where Byron, Peel, Palmerston, Sheridan, Manning, and other immortal youths wrestled with their future, even as Jacob wrestled with the angel.

Mark and his friend Jim Corrance became Harrovians when they were fourteen, taking their places in the First Shell, the highest form but one open to new boys. Archibald Samphire, their senior by eighteen months, had just reached the Upper Remove, two forms ahead of the First Shell.

The three boys travelled together from King's Charteris to London; but at Euston Mark and Jim were bundled by Archie into a first-class carriage, with

instructions to sit still and not "swagger." Archie joined some swells on the platform. One of these Olympians lighted a cigar, which he smoked for a couple of minutes, throwing it away with the observation that really he must tell the dear old governor to buy better weeds.

"How do you feel, Mark?" whispered Jim.

"If I l-looked as small as I f-f-feel," said Mark, "you wouldn't be able to s-s-see me."

An hour later they stood in the schoolyard. Here "bill" was called; here yard-cricket, beloved by many generations of boys, was played; here, peering out of his cell, might be seen the rosy, clean-shaven face of old Sam, *Custos*, as the Doctor called him; that sly old Sam who sold all things pertaining to Harrow games at a preposterous profit; who prepared the rods, who was present when those rods fell hurtling upon the bare flesh—Sam of the fair, round belly, Sam of the ripe, ruby-coloured nose, who has led bishops, statesmen, field-m Marshals, peers and baronets, members of Parliament, members of the Bar, members of the Stock Exchange—to the BLOCK! Can it be possible that Sam has passed away? Surely not. Is he not part and parcel of the Yard? And when the Yard lies silent and deserted, when the moonbeams alone play upon it, when the school clock tolls midnight, does not the ghost

of old Sam fare forth on his familiar rounds, keeping watch and ward in the ancient precincts?

From the Yard Archibald escorted Mark and Jim to Billy's, their boarding-house, where the boys found themselves joint tenants of a two-room, a piece of good fortune (for there were several three-rooms and one four-room) which they owed partly to Archie, as he was careful to inform them, and partly to the high places they had taken in the school. Long and narrow, with a door at one end and a window at the other, this room contained two battered fold-up bedsteads, two washhand-stands, two bureaux, a shabby carpet, a table, a fireplace, and three Windsor chairs. Here the boys were expected to work, to sleep, and to eat breakfast and tea. No room, according to Mark, has since given him the pleasure and pride which he derived from this. And Jim Corrance, after he had made his enormous fortune, liked to speak of the first sporting-prints which he bought and of the moth-eaten head of a red deer, a nine-pointer, found in an attic at Pitt Hall, the home of the Samphires.

This first summer term was as pleasant as any Mark spent at Harrow. He learned to swim in "Ducker," the school bathing-place, a puddle in those days, but since greatly enlarged and improved; he was taught to play cricket with a straight bat; he lay upon the green slopes of the Sixth Form Ground and ate ices; he

spent his *exeat* at Randolph House in Belgrave Square, and witnessed at "Lord's" the defeat of the Eton eleven from the top of Lord Randolph's coach, returning to Harrow with a sovereign in his pocket, pride in his heart, and heaven knows what mixture of pie and pudding and champagne in his small stomach!

At Billy's the colour, tone, and texture of the "house" were exceptionally good. Billy treated his boys as gentlemen. Some dominies play the spy, thereby turning boys into enemies instead of friends; Billy always coughed discreetly when making his rounds. And if he had reason to suspect a boy of conduct unbecoming an Harrovian, he would send for him and speak to him quietly, or perhaps, if the offender was a good fellow, ask him to breakfast or dinner, heaping food upon his plate and coals of fire upon his head. His favourite warning may be quoted: "I have had my eye on you for some time." But Mark knew, even then, that Billy's eyes were none of the best, and that often they pretended not to see much that a wise man overlooks.

The first year passed quickly. Mark and Jim found themselves in the Lower Remove at the beginning of the winter term, where they achieved the distinction of a "double," jumping over the Upper Remove into the Third Fifth, known as "Paradise," a place so pleasant that some boys refused to leave it. One

could say to aunts and uncles, "Oh, I'm in the Fifth," and few were unkind enough to ask, "Which Fifth?" Here they found Archie and a friend of his, Lubber West, who in these latter days doubtless would have been superannuated, and not without cause. Archie and the Lubber practised what they called the "co-operative system of work." They would come to Mark's room and sit upon the sofa with a large gallipot of strawberry-ice between them. Then Mark and Jim were instructed to "mug up" forty lines of Euripides. This took time, and meanwhile the ice was consumed and anything else in the form of light refreshment which might be offered. When Mark was ready to construe, Archie and the Lubber produced a couple of battered books, and listened attentively enough to what Mark had to say, noting in light pencil marks unfamiliar verbs and nouns. In this way, as Archie observed, much valuable time was saved, and the lesson honourably learned. Archie had a number of "cribs," but, as elder brother, he denounced their use by Mark as immoral. "Samphire senior has given us a very 'Smart'* translation," was one of Billy's *bon mots*, not original with him by any means, but accepted by his pupils as proof of wit and gentlemanlike satire.

During this half, Archibald was working hard at

* Horace was translated by Smart.

cricket, under the kindly eyes of those famous coaches, the late Lord Bessborough and Mr. Robert Grimston. He had more than a chance of playing for the school; and accordingly he pointed out to Mark that it was the junior's duty to help his senior with Greek and Latin. "If I do get my flannels,"* he said, "you will reap your reward." Archibald was now a glorious specimen of Anglo-Saxon youth. He had crisp yellow hair, curling tightly over a round, well-proportioned head, the clear, ruddy skin which from the days of David has always commanded admiration, and a tenor voice of peculiarly fine quality. Mark was his humble and adoring slave. Now, it chanced that in a shop half-way down Harrow Hill two young women possessed of bright complexions and waspish waists served hot chocolate and buttered toast to boys coming up from the playing fields, and in particular to certain boys of Billy's. Behind the shop was a back room, into which two or three big fellows were admitted. In a certain set it became the thing to drop into Brown's at half-past four and have a lark with the girls. The girls were able to take care of themselves; the boys lost their heads. Because Archie's head was a pretty one, the girls were not particularly anxious that he should find it. During the Christmas

* The white flannels only worn by members of the school eleven.

term he and a boy from another house were in and out of Brown's half a dozen times a day, and the school wondered what would happen.

"I l-l-loathe those girls," said Mark; "one b-b-bubbles and one squeaks."

Billy's seized the phrase. Within a week the girls were known as Bubble and Squeak. One of the fags pinned a card to Archie's door:—

"Which do you like best: chocolate and buttered toast or Bubble and Squeak?"

"What can we do?" said Mark to Jim.

"Is it Bubble or Squeak?" Jim asked.

"I d-d-don't know or care; they're vulgar b-b-beasts. Old Archie has a lock of hair. They've given away tons of it: enough to stuff a sofa."

"They can get more from the same old place," said Jim.

"Oh, it's their own," said Mark. "I hate marmalade-coloured hair—don't you?"

It was after this brief dialogue that Jim noticed a falling off of Mark's interest in his work. For the first time a copy of Iambics deserved some of the remarks which the form-master made upon them. During the next fortnight this negligence, coupled with his stutter and a temporary deafness, sent Mark to the bottom of his class. Jim asked for an explanation.

"It's old Archie. He's playing the devil with himself."

"Let him," said Jim, who was no altruist. "What's the good of worrying? We can't do anything."

"Perhaps we c-c-can," said Mark. "We *must*," he added.

"You have a scheme?"

Mark nodded. "I d-d-don't know w-what you'll say to it."

"I can't say anything till I hear it."

"S-suppose I give Billy a hint?"

The scheme was so alien to a boy's conception of the word "honour," such a violation of an unwritten code—in fine, such a desperate remedy, that Jim gasped.

"D-don't look like that!" said Mark sharply. "C-can't you see that I loathe it—as—you do. If m-mother were alive I'd write to her. But if I told father, he would come bellowing down, and behave like a bull in a china shop. There would be a jolly r-r-row then."

"Mark," said Jim, "Archie is big enough to look after himself."

"It's worse than you think," Mark said. "He's meeting this g-g-girl after lock-up. He gets out of the pantry window. I daresay he's squared one of the Tobies" (Toby was the generic name for footmen). "And it's frightfully r-r-risky. If he's nailed, he'll be sacked."

"What a silly old ass!" said Jim.

"He runs these frightful risks for what? To kiss a girl who bubbles at the mouth!"

"It's the one who squeaks," Jim amended. "And she's an artful dodger. She thinks he'll marry her. All right, I'll go with you to Billy after prayers to-night."

"I'll go alone."

"You won't."

"I will."

"No."

"Yes; yes; yes."

Jim's obstinacy prevailed. After prayers, the boys waited in the passage. Jim had been swished by the Doctor in the Fourth Form Room, and his sensations before execution reproduced themselves. Mark seemed cool and collected.

"Sit down," said Billy. "Open your books."

Mark laid his Thucydides upon the table.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Billy. He had pushed up his spectacles while he was speaking. Now, he polished a pair of pince-nez and popped them on his nose. Nervousness is contagious.

"We have c-c-come here to t-t-tell you, s-sir, s-s-something which you ought to know."

The house-master blinked, and glanced at both doors. One communicated with the passage, the other

opened into the drawing-room, where his wife was playing one of Strauss's waltzes: *Wein, Weib und Gesang*. Whenever Jim heard this waltz he could conjure up a vision of that square, cosy, book-lined room, the big desk littered with papers, and behind it the burly figure of Billy, his eyes blinking interrogation. He let Mark take his own time.

"Something wrong in the house?" said Billy.

"Yes, sir."

Billy seized a quill pen, and began to bite it.

"Isn't this a serious step for you boys to take?" he asked suddenly.

"Yes, sir."

His gravity became portentous. Perhaps he feared an abominable revelation.

"You both understand," he coughed nervously, "that I may be compelled to act on what you choose to tell me; and if what you have to say implicates—er—others, if others may—er—have to—er—suffer, perhaps severely," he nodded so emphatically that his pince-nez fell off, "it may be well for you to—er—in fact—to," he blew his nose violently, "to bid me Good night."

"Not yet," said Mark firmly.

Billy's hesitation vanished.

"Go on," he said curtly. "Speak plainly, and conceal nothing."

Mark told his story. He made no mention of the

pantry window, nor of the meetings after lock-up. For the rest, he spoke with a conciseness and practical commonsense which filled Jim with admiration. As he was concluding, Billy began to smile.

"You are both good fellows, and I'm obliged to you. You must dine with me. I shall pull a string or two, and our—er—marionettes, mark that word; it is pat; our marionettes shall dance elsewhere."

"Not Archie?" gasped Mark.

"No. We can't spare Archibald. I undertake to handle him. Silly fellow, very silly fellow! His father and mother put a better head on your shoulders, my boy;" he tapped Mark's cheek. "And now open old Thicksides. Eh, what? you know your lesson? Then let's hear it." Jim got rather red. "I shan't put you on, Corrance, but Samphire junior and I will construe for your benefit. Fire away, Samphire junior."

The boys went back to their room to find Archie at full length on the sofa. His greeting justified Billy's sagacity in keeping Mark to construe Thucydides. "What a time you fellows have been. I suppose Billy gave you half a dozen readings. Well, let's have 'em, late though it is. I must get my remove this term."

So no suspicion was excited.

Within the week Bubble and Squeak mysteriously disappeared, and Samphire senior had an interview with his house-master. What passed was not revealed at

the time, but, later, Archie gave Mark some details, which are set down with the premiss that a minor canon of Westchester Cathedral is speaking, not a Fifth Form boy at Harrow.

"Do you remember those girls at Brown's?" he said. "Well, I fell in love with one of them. What? You knew it? Oh! Oh, indeed! The whole school knew it? Ah, well, Billy knew it too. Sent for me, and behaved like a gentleman. Made me blubber like a baby. I give you my word I never felt quite so cheap. It wasn't what he said, but what he left unsaid. And I promised him that I would have nothing more to do with Squeak. He told me a thing or two about her which opened my eyes; she was a baggage, but pretty, very pretty: an alluring little spider. I felt at the time I would go through fire and water to her——"

"Not to mention a pantry window," said Mark, grinning.

"You don't mean to say that you knew that too? Well, well, it might have proved an ugly scrape."

For a year after this incident, the sun shone serenely in the Samphire firmament. The brothers moved up out of Paradise, into the Second Fifth, Paradise Lost, and thence into the First Fifth, Paradise Regained, singing pœans of praise and thanksgiving. This was at the beginning of Mark's third summer term, the term

when Archie made a great score at Lord's, carrying out his bat for eighty-seven runs in the first innings; the term, also, when Mark received his "cap,"* the night before the match wherein Billy's became cock house at cricket!

CHAPTER II.

BILLY'S v. POODLE'S.

DURING this summer term Mark and Jim built some castles, in which, as you will see, they were not called upon to live. If Fate made men dwell in the mansions of their dreams how many of us would find ourselves queerly housed? Mark's castles were military fortresses. He had the pipeclay in his marrow, whereas Jim saw the Queen's red through his friend's spectacles. The boys studied the lives of famous captains, from Miltiades to Wellington, and at tea and breakfast would fight the world's great battles with such well-seasoned troops as chipped plates and saucers, a battered salt-cellar and pepper-pot, a glass milk-jug, and a Britannia metal tea-pot, which would not pour properly. India, and in particular the Indian frontier, was their battlefield: the scene of a strife such as the world has not yet wit-

* The "cap" is the house cricket-cap, given to members of the house eleven.

nessed; a struggle between the Slav and the Anglo-Saxon for the supremacy of the world. Mark boldly reached for a marshal's *bâton*; Jim modestly contented himself with the full pay of a general, the Victoria Cross, and a snug little crib in a good hunting country.

Sometimes Archie deigned to listen to them, but he was not encouraging in his comments.

"You, a soldier!" he would exclaim, looking at Mark's narrow chest and skinny arms; "why you'd die of fatigue in your first campaign. I advise you to be a schoolmaster."

"You have f-f-forgotten" (most boys would have said "you don't know"), "you have forgotten," Mark replied, "that Alexander was a small man; and Nelson, and Napoleon, and Wellington."

"Pooh, they were hard as nails."

That same evening Mark said: "I'm g-going to the Gym" (gymnasium) "every day, till I get hard as nails."

"Not in the summer?" Jim exclaimed.

"Yes; I'll have the place to myself—so much the better."

He worked indefatigably, and Jim was asked to feel his biceps about four times a day.

About the middle of June Jim made a discovery. High up, on one of the inside panels of his bedstead, he found the name of a gallant fellow who had fought gloriously in the Indian Mutiny.

"I'd like to sleep in his bed," said Mark.

"What a rum chap you are!" Jim exclaimed.

"If I sleep in his bed I may d-dream of him," Mark replied.

They changed beds with mutual satisfaction for Jim's had a trick of collapsing in the middle of the night.

Later on Jim made another discovery: subjective this time. Mark was overdoing himself: working mind and muscle too hard. Never was spirit more willing, nor flesh more weak. One day, a sultry day in the middle of July, he fainted in school. That night Billy detained Jim after prayers.

"*Entre nous*, I am uneasy about Samphire junior," he said. "And as two heads are better than one I've sent for you, his friend and—er—mine. What do you suggest?"

At that moment Jim would have gone to the rack for Billy. As Jim suggested nothing, Billy continued: "The case presents difficulties, but difficulties give an edge to life, don't they?"

"Sometimes," said Jim cautiously; for Billy had a trick of leading fellows on to make fools of themselves.

"Samphire junior goes too fast at his fences."

Billy knew that any allusion to the hunting-field was not wasted on Jim.

"And the fences," continued Billy thoughtfully, "are rather big for Samphire junior."

"And he won't ride cunning," added Jim.

"Just so. Thank you, my dear fellow; you follow me, I see. Now Samphire senior, big though he is, takes advantage of the—er—gaps."

"Rather," said Jim.

"Humph!" Billy stroked his ample chin. Jim was reflecting that his tutor was too heavy for a first-flight man, but that in his day he must have been a thruster.

"In fine, not to put too fine a point on it, *we* must interfere."

"Yes," said Jim, swelling visibly.

"We must head him off, throw him out, teach him that valuable lesson, how to *reculer pour mieux sauter*."

If Billy had a weakness (a *faible*, he would have said), it was in the use of French, which he spoke perfectly.

"Ye-es," said Jim, not so confidently.

"Now, how would you set about it?"

"I, sir? If you please, sir, I don't see my way, but I'll follow your lead blindly, sir!"

Billy smiled, and polished his pince-nez.

"We shall move slow. The blind leading the blind. Both of you expect to be in the Sixth next September?

Yes. Suppose, I only say suppose, suppose you were left—where you are?”

“Oh, sir!”

“Come, come, I thought Paradise Regained was the jolliest form in the school.”

“It is,” said Jim, “but——”

“You are rather young and small for the Sixth. Why, God bless me! only the other day you were fags. Now, if I gave you my word that there would be no real loss of time, that you would fare farther and better by taking it easy, what would you say?”

“I say all right, sir.”

“Good boy! Wise boy! Leave the rest to me. I shall see that Samphire senior goes up, which is fitting. The height will give him—er—poise, not *avoirduois*, of which he has enough already. Samphire junior will not complain if you keep him company. Good night. *A propos*—will you and Samphire junior dine with us next Tuesday? A glass of champagne will do neither of you any harm.”

Next term Mark became less angular, and some colour came into his thin cheeks. Both Jim and he played football hard in the hope of obtaining a “fez.”* Harrow, like Eton and Winchester, has a game of football peculiarly its own, differing from “socker” in that it is lawful to give what is called “yards.” A boy, for

* Worn by members of the house football eleven.

instance, dribbling the ball, may turn and kick it to one of his own side. If this manoeuvre be executed neatly, the other boy catches it and yells: "Yards!" Then the opposite side retires three yards from the spot where the ball was caught, and the catcher is given a free kick, which at a critical point of the game may prove of value. In Billy's brute force rather than finesse informed the play, a fact which had not escaped Mark's notice.

"We lose lots of goals," said Mark to Jim, "because we try to rush 'em, instead of giving 'yards' and taking it coolly. Let's you and I practise 'yards' till we have it p-pat. Our best players f-foozle awfully."

Accordingly they bought a football and kicked it secretly and assiduously, Mark insisting that "yards" should not be given by them in the ordinary house games till they were masters of a wet, slippery ball. Then, one afternoon, when Billy came down to see how his house was getting on, both boys gave "yards," in the forefront of the battle. As they panted up the hill after the game, Archibald, in the school flannels, asked if they were much the worse for wear. In giving "yards" where the advantage was greatest, they had been knocked down several times.

"You fellows played up," said the great man. "If you go on like that, I may give you a chance next Saturday."

"Thanks awfully," said Mark.

Saturday came, and with it the first of the series of house-matches. When the list went up on the old landing at the head of the rickety stairs, and when Mark's and Jim's names were seen, a howl of remonstrance was heard.

"They'll be getting babies to play next," said many whose names were not on the list.

Archibald sent for Mark and spoke a sharp word: "They accuse me of favouring, the silly fools, as if my brother wasn't the last fellow in the house I'd think of favouring."

"I know that, Archie."

"You see," Archibald explained, "this match with Poodle's doesn't count. We must give 'em a licking, and afterwards it will be just as easy to let you drop out, as it was to stick you in."

The school, however, were of opinion that this match might prove a surprise for Billy's. Poodle's was not a first-class team, but there were big fellows in it who had the reputation of playing a savage game. Poodle's, it was said, would sell their souls and bodies to lower Billy's pride, and Billy's would sell theirs as cheerfully rather than Poodle's should triumph. Billy's included two members of the school eleven, Archie and the Lubber; Poodle's had one, but he was reckoned the finest player of his generation.

The game began. Half the school was present, including Billy, who was known to miss many things in life, but his house-match—never! Behind the crowd of boys the austere figure of the Doctor sat erect on his brown horse.

Archie kicked off. The wind carried the ball to Poodle's top-side. There a lean, long-legged, long-winded Poodleite stopped it, kicked it, and swooped after it like a lurcher after a rabbit. By virtue of his speed he shot by Billy's top-side men before they had got into their stride; in another second he had kicked the ball again—and again. It rose slowly, sailed over the head of the back, who was not quite back, and just fell between and through the goal-posts.

Poodle's bellowed itself into a frenzy. Billy's smiled coldly and critically. Archie had a vacuous expression, as of an ox stricken by a pole-axe. Mark's eyes were shining.

"We are going to have a f-fight," he said.

Within ten minutes Poodle's had kicked a second goal almost as "flukey" as the first. Stupor spread like a London fog. Billy's was demoralised. At times bad luck paralyses mind and muscles. On such occasions the man of finer clay than his fellows seeks and finds opportunity. Mark, for instance, rose to and above this emergency. He, the smallest player on the ground, the one, physically speaking, least well equipped

- for the task, thrust himself into the breach between promise and performance. In the brief interval, after the second goal had been kicked, he went up to Archie and the Lubber, who were standing apart, inert and speechless.

"I s-say," stammered Mark, "you must change your tactics."

The Lubber raised his heavy head.

"Shut up, Mark!" said Archibald.

"I won't," said Mark. "These Poodleites haven't a chance if *you* d-d-do the right thing."

Archie scowled; but the Lubber, who had reason to respect Mark's abilities as a scholar, growled: "Well, what is the right thing?"

"The Poodleites are drunk with success. If we go canny, they'll play themselves out. Then we can trample on 'em. Don't attack a victorious enemy! Defence is our game. Pull our fellows together! Tell 'em to keep c-cool and quiet for ten minutes; close in the top-sides; keep the whole eleven in front of our g-goal!"

"By Jove! he's right," said the Lubber. Archie kicked off for the second time; and the Poodleites fell on the ball, kicked it hard, and charged furiously. Met by a solid phalanx, hurled back, bruised and broken—they charged again and again, panting and bellowing;

but Billy's held together. Doubtless Billy himself fathomed the plan of campaign, for when the fry of his house began to complain, when cries of "*Follow up! Follow up!*" were heard above the yells of the Poodleites, when shrill voices screamed, "Now's your chance!" or, in disconsolate wail, "Why don't you run, you idiot!" or, in still more poignant accents, "Good Lord! what is the matter with the fools?"—then, above these heart-breaking cries, boomed a big bass voice:

"Steady, Billy's! Well played! Steady! Steady there!"

Within ten minutes of half-time it was plain that the enemy was exhausted. Wild eyes, heaving chests, pallid faces confronted a team full of running and brimful of hope. At the next pause Archie moved along the line. *Orders to charge.* And didn't Billy's charge? Didn't every boy's heart thrill to that whispered word? Charge? Aye, with a yell which must have echoed in the Fourth Form Room, nearly a mile away. Charge? Yes—with the fury of the Light Brigade at Balaclava! And the Poodleites bowed down before that charge like the worshippers of Baal beneath the sword of the Prophet! It was Homeric, worthy, so Billy said, of the finest traditions of the house.

One goal to two—and half-time.

While Billy's sucked the lemons which the fry hurled at them, Jim found time to observe to Mark: "I say, so far *we* haven't scored."

"N-n-not yet," said Mark.

Poodle's kicked off. They had got their second wind, and also sound advice from their captain, a man of guile, who has since been seen and heard at Baba Wali, at Abu Klea, and at Suakin. The Poodleites herded together, bent on retaining the advantage of their one goal, not daring to risk it in pursuit of another. Once, twice, thrice, Billy's swept up the field, to be driven back and back when within a dozen paces of the Poodleite citadel. And then, at the fourth essay, Jim's chance came. He had the ball between his legs. "Kick it, kick it!" screamed Billy's. "*Yards*," whispered Mark. Jim turned mechanically, kicking the ball into Archie's outstretched hands as the leading Poodleite rolled him head over heels in the mud.

A silence fell on players and onlookers. Archie took his time, eyeing anxiously the distance between himself and the goal-posts. Jim shut his eyes, which in point of fact were nearly closed already. A roar of applause from Billy's, a despairing groan from Poodle's, proclaimed the accuracy of the kick.

Two goals all, and twenty minutes to play!

The Lubber sauntered up, sucking a lemon, and stolid as usual.

"Well," said he to Mark, "what'll happen now?"

"Why they'll play up like m-mad, of course.

They've everything to gain, and precious little to lose. We ought to go back to our defensive tactics. Let 'em p-pump 'emselves out, and then smash 'em."

"Good kid," said the old Lubber; "if your body was half as big as your brain, you'd be a corker."

He was seen talking to Archie; and Archie was nodding his handsome head, as if in accord. Before the ball was kicked off, word was passed round to play on the defensive. These tactics may seem elementary to the modern player, but five-and-twenty years ago football on both sides of the Atlantic was go-as-you-please—a succession of wild and unpremeditated rushes, with much brilliant individual work, but lacking in strategy and organisation.

Within a few minutes of resuming play, the Lubber stupidly interposed his ankle between a boot and the ball, forgetting that his skull was the most invulnerable part of his person, with the result that Billy's lost his services and weight when they were most needed. Archie, too, was slightly disabled and more than slightly dismayed. Poodle's pressed their advantage with vigour.

"It's all right," Mark panted.

Archie had the ball and was away, his side streaming after him. Down the field he sped, faster and faster. The biggest Poodlite met him shoulder to shoulder in full career. The Poodlite reeled over back-

wards; Archie hardly swerved. On and on strode that glorious figure. Only one more Poodleite stood between him and the goal; but he, crafty as Ulysses, was quick to perceive what must be done. The ball rolled between him and the all-conquering Archie. He rushed forward. Archie crashed into him. The Poodleite fell, but the ball sailed towards a group of battered gladiators, who, having abandoned pursuit, were awaiting just such a piece of good fortune as now befell them.

"Get back!" yelled the fry.

Billy's got back in the nick of time, mad with disappointment. The Poodleites retreated, cursing. In a minute "Time" would be called. At this moment Mark darted out of a scrimmage dribbling the ball.

A second later he turned his back upon three big fellows who were within ten feet of him, knowing that they would meet with irresistible force on the spot where he was standing, and knowing—who better?—his own feebleness of bone and sinew. He turned and gave "yards."

Jim looked down.

When Jim looked up a pile of figures lay upon the wet, mud-stained grass, and the ball was in the hands of a sure and safe player. And then, as a roar of applause ascended from the throats of everybody on the ground, the word "Time" fell like a thunderbolt.

The match was over. Poodle's had tied Billy's.

But the eyes of the crowd rested on the pile in front of Poodle's goal. Three figures rose silently; the fourth lay face down in the mire. Archie touched his brother lightly.

"You're all right, old chap, aren't you?"

Mark did not answer. His arm was turned outward at a curious angle.

"Back," said Archie, as the two elevens surged forward. "Back!"

He faced them, terror-stricken, and Jim Corrance had never admired him so much nor liked him so well, because his strong voice trembled and his keen blue eyes were wet.

"Mark," he cried, kneeling down, "don't you hear me? Don't you hear me?" His voice broke. "My God!" he exclaimed, "he's dead!"

The face upturned to the chill November skies was of death's colour; the eyes stared glassily; the livid lips were parted in a grim smile heart-breaking to see. The two elevens formed a ring around the brothers and Billy, who had his fingers on Mark's pulse. Beyond this inner circle was the outer circle of spectators. One boy began to sneeze, and the silence had become so impressive that his sneeze seemed a personal affront, an unseemly violation. Archibald was crying

as men cry—silently, with convulsive movements of the limbs.

Just then the school doctor hurried up. Fortunately he was on the ground, but had retired with the Lubber to a distant bench, busy in bandaging that giant's ankle. Kneeling down, he laid his ear to the small blue-and-white striped chest.

"I can't feel any pulse," Billy growled.

The doctor's head was as that of a graven image.

"Why don't you do something?" Archibald demanded, giving expression to the unspoken entreaty of three hundred boys.

The doctor paid no attention; he was listening for that murmur of life which would justify his doing anything.

"He is coming to," he muttered.

"He is coming to," passed from lip to lip. The school sighed with relief. The clouds above let fall a few drops of rain.

"A hurdle," commanded the doctor, "and some coats!"

Billy was the first to pull off his overcoat. The doctor touched Mark's body in a dozen places. Mark gasped and gurgled; then he tried to sit up—and succeeded.

"Back's all right," said the doctor. "Keep quiet, my boy! You're a little the worse for wear. There,

there, shut your eyes and believe that we shall hurt you as little as possible. Your arm is broken."

The news spread while the hurdle was being brought. Mark closed his eyes and lay back. The captain of Poodle's stepped forward.

"May *I* help to carry the hurdle?" he said.

The biggest swells were proud to carry that hurdle! The school formed itself into two long lines; and when Mark passed through—pale, but smiling—some chord was struck, which thrilled into sound.

"*Three cheers for Samphire junior!*"

The brave shout rolled over the playing-fields and up Harrow Hill, past the Music Schools which recorded it; past the Chapel, where its subtle vibrations were enshrined; past the Yard, which gave back the glad acclaim of valour; past the Vaughan Library, startling, perhaps, some bookworm too intent upon what has been to care greatly for what is and may be; down the familiar street, where countless generations of ardent boys had hastened to work or play; on and on till it reached Billy's—Billy's with its hoary traditions of innumerable battles fought and won, Billy's shabby and battered, scarred within and without, Billy's—dear old Billy's—where it became merged but not lost, in the whole of which every valiant word or deed or thought is an imperishable part!

CHAPTER III.

WHICH CONTAINS A FORTUNE.

AT lock-up Billy announced that Mark's injuries, albeit severe, were not such as to cause his friends serious anxiety. And so, when Archie came to Jim's room with a face as long as the catalogue of ships in the *Iliad*, and when the two boys present got up and left hurriedly at his impatient nod of dismissal, you may believe that Jim's heart began to thump and his eyes to pop out of his head with interrogation.

"I dropped in to tell you, you could get your 'fez,'" said Archie.

"Oh, thanks awfully. And—and Mark?"

"I bought one for him and sent it in. He got it after his arm was set."

Jim's heart warmed to the big fellow. "I'm glad you thought of that."

"His advice saved the match, and—and—and—" his voice had a curious quaver in it—"and it's no good. Mark can never play footer again."

He sat down and laid his curly head upon a Greek lexicon.

"You see," Archie continued heavily, "I thought Mark would step into my shoes."

"Good Lord!" said Jim, seeing Mark's foot. "He'd lose himself in 'em."

"The Lubber says he'd have made a great player, a great captain."

"So he will yet. Footer's not the only game."

"That's true. There's cricket." Archie's face brightened. "I must push him on at that. The governor might get a 'pro' to bowl to him during the Easter holidays. He shall, by Jove! Yes, you're right. I was a fool not to think of that. And when he leaves there will have been three Samphires of Pitt Hall in the school eleven. I'll go now. I've got to tackle a nasty bit of *Æschylus*. You played up like fun to-day. I told the Doctor you came from our part of Slowshire. He said something in Greek which I couldn't make head or tail of; but I grinned, because I made certain it was complimentary. I say, don't be in too much of a hurry to get into the Sixth. A fellow can't work and play too. And I didn't come to Harrow to be killed by Greek tragedians. By-the-bye, if you could go down and give the old Lubber a 'con,' he'd be grateful. He'd come up, as usual, only he doesn't want to climb these stairs. Good night. We're to see Mark to-morrow, if he has a decent sleep."

After Archie had left the room, Jim rose to go

downstairs to the Lubber, and in rising his eye caught a picture of Mark's mother, which hung to the right of the head of the nine-pointer. On the other side was a picture of the Squire, a capital portrait of that fine specimen of the country gentleman. From time immemorial the owners of Pitt Hall had sought wives in Slowshire; but Mark's father went a-wooing in London, and married a delicate creature of sensibility, refinement, and culture, the daughter of an eloquent and impecunious member of Parliament, a friend of Cobden and Bright, with some of Sheridan's wild blood in his veins, tempered, however, by a tincture of John Wesley's. This lady bore her husband three sons: George, cut to the old Samphire pattern (whose fortunes do not concern us), Archibald, and Mark, the stammerer. Then she died, and in due time the Squire of Pitt Hall married again, selecting Miss Selina Lamb, of Cranberry-Orcas, of whom mention has been made.

Jim stared at both portraits, seeing dimly the gulf between husband and wife, realising that Mark was his mother's child, even as Archie was as truly the son of his burly father. Mrs. Samphire's pathetic eyes seemed to pierce his heart, so poignant was the reflection that the mother's fine qualities of head and heart had been reproduced faithfully, and with them her infirmity of body. Then he blundered out into the dimly

lit passage and stumbled against Nixon minimus going to supper, although he was as full of tea and potted meat, and hot buttered toast, and strawberry jam as a Fourth Form boy could be.

"I say," whined Nixon minimus, "I wish you'd look and see whom you're shovin' into."

"I am looking," said Jim. "Unless I'm vastly mistaken, I heard you say to me this afternoon: 'Why don't you run, you silly fool?' I'm going to answer that question now. I didn't run because I was playing to orders. Later, when I was lying flat on my back, with the wind squeezed out of me, you specially urged me to get up and play up. Yes, you didn't mean it, of course, but I happen to want to kick somebody, and I'm going to kick you, you spoiled infant, you! Take that, and that!"

Jim went on his way relieved in mind and uplifted. The Lubber welcomed him warmly, looking very funny, with his swollen foot in a footbath and a huge piece of sticking-plaster across his nose. On his lap lay a battered volume of Livy and a crib.

"I can give you a rare good pie," he said; "if you're hungry, stick your nose into that cupboard!"

Jim declined this hospitable offer, and picked up the Livy.

"These cribs aren't much help," growled the Lubber. "It's the verbs and idioms that flummux me. Eh?"

What? Oh, done it before! Bless you—a dozen times; but my memory is rotten. As Billy said in pupil-room last week, ‘You’ll forget your own name some day, West, and sign it North.’ Rather bad form making puns on a fellow’s name. By gad! I’m glad you came. No, hang the ‘con!’ I’ll chance it. I want to have a yarn with you about the Kid. Awful—wasn’t it? And Archie says he won’t be allowed to play footer again. Old Archie has taken it hard. Not a bad chap, Archie, but a bit stodgy—like me. It’s on my mind that I’ve had a hand in the over-doin’ of the Kid. He’s a corker is the Kid. I must be blind as a bat, not to have found that out before. But he must go slow, or he’ll break down. Now it wouldn’t surprise me if the Kid made a mark. What? A joke? Not I. Never made one in my life—except by accident. I mean he’ll turn over some big things some day.”

“He seems to have turned over some big things to-day. The three Poodleites weren’t small.”

The Lubber laughed.

“To relieve your mind,” Jim continued, “I don’t mind telling you that Billy has his eye on the Kid. He won’t break down in his training.”

The Lubber accepted this assurance with the faith of a child; then he looked at the cupboard.

“I think,” said he, “that if you don’t mind haul-

ing out that pie, I'll have a go at it. Somehow, I couldn't tackle my tea. You'll have some too, eh? That's right. I never feel quite myself when my tummy's empty."

Next day, after dinner, Archie saw Mark. He was in bed, and above the bed hung his "fez," placed there by the matron. Archibald tiptoed into the room, feeling rather uncomfortable. Mark, he feared, would be miserable. To his surprise, he was greeted with a grin.

"You don't care——"

"I've thought it out with Billy. He was here before dinner. I slept like a t-top last night, and when Billy came in I read his face. He was awfully d-decent. It's a pity he has only a daughter, although, perhaps, that makes him extra nice to the sons of other people. He said that I was strong enough to know the truth. And the truth is that footer isn't my game. Well, I knew it. But I wanted to get my 'fez,' and—and there it hangs, and there is this. Billy must have had it engraved the f-first thing this morning."

He put his hand under his pillow, and pulled out a small hunting-flask. Upon it was inscribed his name, and beneath, in small script, the line:

"Palmam qui meruit ferat."

"He gave me this," said Mark, "and with it a jolly

good jaw. He m-made me see that w-w-weakness is part of my kit, and the w-weak make the running for the strong; and it's no use messin' about and trying to do what others can do much better. And he s-said that a fellow who rebelled and sulked was a silly ass—and—by Jove!—he's r-right!"

Mark recovered quickly, and was treated as an honoured guest by his kind hostess, who played and sang to him every day. Boys, particularly English boys, are not taught to express their gratitude in happy phrases, but perhaps it is none the less on that account. If the lady who played Strauss's waltzes to Mark Samphire should chance to read these lines, let her believe that the memory of her kindness has ripened with the passing years.

After the Christmas holidays Mark and Jim found themselves in the Sixth, privileged to "fag," and accepted by Billy's as Olympians. It was a pleasant term, and at the end of it Archibald won the school mile. Mark trained him. Most of the boys who trained, trained too hard; and here again Mark's weakness developed his brother's strength: they took their "runs" slowly, but regularly. During these spring afternoons more than fresh air was imbibed. Mark had capacity for absorbing information about places and people. To him an ordinary cottage was a volume of romance; a man asleep by the roadside quickened speculation; a

travelling van held inexhaustible material. One day they came upon an encampment of gipsies. Mark insisted upon stopping to speak to an onyx-eyed urchin, who asked for coppers, and while they were talking a handsome girl of sixteen lounged forward, addressing Mark as "my pretty gentleman."

"Go along with you," said Mark. "I'm as ugly as they make 'em."

"You are not," the girl replied, staring impudently into his eyes. "Your eyes are bits of heaven's own blue; and the women will look into them and love you."

Mark turned scarlet.

"And you," the hussy turned to Archie. "Ah, you're a real beauty, but your brother's eyes are handsomer than yours."

"How do you know he's my brother?" said Archie.

"We Romanies know many things. Give me half a crown, and I'll tell you both a true fortune."

"Shall we take a bob's worth?" said Archie. "Six-pence each?"

"I'll read your hand for a bob," said the girl, "and his," she nodded at Mark, "for nothing."

Archie produced a shilling. The girl took his hand between her long, slender fingers, and gazed at the lines on it.

"Well," said a harsh voice, "what do you see?"

An old hag, possibly the girl's grandmother, had approached silently.

"Hullo," said Archie, "I suppose you're the queen of the gipsies. Mother Shipton herself," he added *sotto voce*.

"I'm a Stanley," said the old woman, not without dignity. "You're one as looks for queens on thrones. The greatest queens, my pretty sir, don't sit on thrones. Go on, tell his fortune! A child could read that hand and face."

"I see a long life and a full one," droned the girl. "You will get what you want, because you will want it so badly."

"A true fortune," mumbled the old woman.

"Your turn, Mark," said Archie. "Hold out your paw!"

Reluctantly, Mark obeyed. The girl took his hand as she had taken Archie's, very delicately, and smoothed the palm with a touch that was not unlike a caress. A puzzled smile curled her red lips. The old woman peered over her shoulder. Again the girl stroked the boy's palm, and he winced.

"Shrinks from a woman's touch," said the old woman.

"You tell it, mother," said the girl.

The old woman bent down.

"A happy hand," she muttered, "a happy hand,

the hand of the free giver, the blessed hand, the kind hand, and the strong hand. Ah, but what is this? Sorrow, suffering, disappointment! And love," her harsh voice softened: "you will love deeply and be loved in return. You are the child of love——"

"I see more," said the girl softly, taking Mark's hand again. "This is the hand of a fighter, mother."

"Aye, so 'tis, so 'tis."

"A fighter and a conqueror."

Before Mark could draw his hand away, she had bent down and kissed it. Then she laughed and tossed her pretty head.

"He'd like a kiss on the mouth," she said, eyeing Archie saucily, "but he won't get one from me."

CHAPTER IV.

MISS HAZELBY IS SHOCKED.

BETTY KIRTLING, when a child, had been heard to say: "I like girls, but I love boys." Perhaps, beneath the smiles of the prim little English misses who came to play with her, she perceived jealousies and meanness, whereas the boys displayed hearts full of love, with no room for anything else where she was concerned. The second Mrs. Samphire maintained Betty to be a spoiled beauty before she was out of pinafores; but Lady Randolph, a finer judge of character, held the contrary opinion. The Admiral, it is true, set his niece upon a pedestal: an action of which the nurse, Esther Gear, took fair advantage. "Lor bless me, Miss Betty! what would your uncle say? You know he thinks you one of the angels," was a phrase often in her mouth, and one not to be disregarded by a child who valued the good opinion of others. "My dear," Lady Randolph would add, "you must never disappoint your uncle. If he knew you had told a fib, it would make him very unhappy." When the time came to choose a governess, she selected a lady of strong character, whose

seeming severity was tempered by a sense of humour and justice. Betty hated her at first, and then learned to love her. Almost irredeemably ugly, with a square masculine head surmounting a tall, lean, awkward figure, Miriam Hazelby made the large impression of one hard to please, but for whose affection and esteem it were worth striving. Her manner, however, was repellent. The austerity of feature and deportment chilled a stranger to the marrow; her harsh voice, emphatic in denouncing humbug and vanity and luxury, only softened when she was speaking of suffering; then a quick ear might catch minor harmonies, captivating because elusive.

During the Easter holidays following the term when the Samphires met the gipsies, Mark was set upon procuring some eggs of the stonechat, which nests in certain sheltered spots upon the Westchester downs. Mark had told Betty—now a girl of fourteen—of his proposed expedition, and she expressed an ardent wish to accompany him. Miriam Hazelby, however, permitted nothing to interfere with lessons. Betty said sorrowfully:

“I don’t suppose Lanky” (her name for Miss Hazelby) “would let me go alone with you; she thinks you a young man, and I’m told twice a week that I’m a young lady. But what a splendid time we would have had!”

Next day, Mark tramped off alone, taking the lane which leads to the downs, and as he was passing the

chalk-pit to the right of the village, Betty sprang into the road with a gay laugh. She carried a basket and wore an old pink linen frock.

"Betty," said Mark, "you've run away."

"Yes. Isn't it fun? Shan't I catch it from Lanky when I get back. I've lunch in this basket. Two big bits of Buszard's cake, some tartlets, sixpennorth of chocolate, four apples, and four bottles of ginger-pop. Catch hold!"

The girl was in wild spirits. It happened to be a day of late April when the sun, pouring its rays into the moist fresh earth, brings forth spring, the Aphrodite of woods and fields, with the foam of milk-white blossoms about her, and a cestus of tender green. As they passed out of the lane on to the soft turf of the downs, the landscape widened till it became panoramic. Behind lay King's Charteris encompassed by hanging woods now bursting into leaf; beyond were rolling downs, wide breezy pastures, sloping southerly and westerly to the sea, which gleamed, a thread of silver, through an opalescent haze.

"Isn't it heavenly?" Betty cried.

"It is r-r-rather jolly!"

"R-r-r-ra—ther jolly," she mimicked him to the life, rounding her shoulders and slouching forward in an attitude which Mark recognised, not without dismay, as his own; "ra—ther jolly, awfully jolly, beastly jolly. How Lanky would love to hear you."

"S-s-shut up, Betty!"

"What! You address a young lady in that manner! I must beg you"—she had caught the accent and intonation of the excellent Miriam—"to speak English. Young people, nowadays, are unintelligible. My father, in whose presence I never ventured to take a liberty with the English language, would not have believed it possible that a gentleman could use such expressions. . . ."

Mark tried to pull her hair, but she ran like Atalanta, Mark following encumbered with the basket. Soon the business of the day began: the finding of the stonechats' nests. Presently they sat down in the shade.

"Let us have a 'beyondy' talk," said Betty.

"A what. . . .?"

"Oh, when talk is about things we can't see, I call it 'beyondy.' I say—tell me, what—what are your be-setting sins!" Then she laughed. "We'll play 'swops.' I'll tell you my sins one by one, if you'll tell me yours. Only you must begin. It will be splendid fun, and, as Lanky says, improving. She says one ought to know oneself. I suppose you, a grand Sixth Form boy, know yourself in all your moods and tenses. Give us a lead. It would be so nice to find that you are wickeder than I."

"I am," said Mark.

"No humbug—and 'bar chaff,' as dear Lanky would not say."

"I'm v-very ambitious, Betty."

She was lying full length on the grass. Now she sat up, opening her eyes very wide.

"Are you really? Ambitious, eh? That's very interesting. I'm not ambitious, not a bit. I'm greedy." As she spoke she set her pretty teeth in an apple. "I'm greedy, and I'm fond of lying in bed. Lanky says these are awful sins. Oh, dear, I've given you two sins to one. Never mind. Lanky says a woman ought to give more than she gets. I say, eat fair with the chocolate. You big boys pretend to despise sweets, but I notice they go jolly quick when you're about. Yes; greediness and sloth. It's horrid, but it's true. You see, I'm bound to be wicked."

"Why?"

"Mother was wicked. I know it. I heard Lady Randolph say—oh, years ago—that she hoped what was bad in the Kirtlings would kill what was worse in the De Courcys. I'm not sure what she meant, and I dared not ask her, because she thought I was looking at some photographs, but it wasn't complimentary, was it?"

"No," said Mark, getting rather red.

"You are blushing," said Betty. "I do believe that you know something. What is it?"

She turned a coaxing face to his, being one of those distracting feminine creatures who have a thousand caresses distinctively their own. Her touch was different

to the touch of other girls—more delicate, more subtle—an appeal to the finer, not the grosser side.

“What do you know?” she murmured.

“I c-can’t tell you,” Mark began bravely, and then ended with a feeble “m-m-much.”

“Boys never can tell much,” said Betty disdainfully. “Go on.”

“Your m-m-mother ran away.”

“Is that all? Why I know more than you. Yes; she ran away. I can’t think why she did, because father was so handsome. I often look at his miniature; and he must have been the most fascinating man that ever lived. Uncle calls him sometimes that ‘rascal Fred.’ Now what does he mean by that?”

“Betty,” said Mark desperately, “this talk is too b-b-beyondy for me.”

She paid no attention whatsoever.

“I spoke to Lanky about it,” she continued gravely. “She was nicer than I had ever seen her. ‘Betty,’ she said, ‘remember that it is not for you to judge your parents. They may not have had your advantages.’ Well, that made me think a bit, and then I hoped their sins would not be visited on me.”

“W-w-what did she say to that, Betty?”

“She nodded that long head of hers in a terrible way. ‘We all suffer,’ she growled, ‘for the evil that others do.’ Do *you* think I must suffer for what they did?”

"No, no," cried Mark. "Why, Betty, to me you are the princess who l-l-lives for ever and ever, fair and happy."

She smiled.

"I love you when you talk like that," she murmured. "And—— Good gracious me!" She dashed some tears from her eyes and sprang to her feet. "Look here, we have that long strip of gorse to do before lunch. Come on! I'll hop you down the hill. One—two—three—OFF!"

Away she went, laughing gaily, leaving care in the shade, and Mark after her—a boy once more, but with an ache at his heart none the less.

At luncheon Betty speculated upon the nature of the punishment which awaited her, assuring Mark that she did not care a hang, revelling the more joyously in the present, because a cloud lay black upon the future.

Presently they discovered that the sun was declining into the soft haze of the western horizon.

"We must run," cried Betty.

They ran and rested, and then ran again till they came to the sharp incline from the downs into the valley which holds the village. And here bad luck tempted them to link hands and race down a slippery, grassy slope. Perhaps Mark went too fast. Betty fell with a dismal thump, and a poignant note of anguish fluttered up from a crumpled heap of linen.

"Are you hurt, Betty?"

"I have twisted my ankle," she groaned, her face puckering with pain.

Mark took off her boot and stocking. The ankle was already swollen and inflamed. What a catastrophe! But Betty assured him she could limp home leaning on his arm. They started very slowly and in silence. A brook bubbled in front of them, and at Mark's advice Betty thrust her foot into the cool water.

"What a horrid ending," sighed Betty, on the verge of tears. "This is the punishment. Lanky will do nothing now."

"I should think not," said Mark indignantly. Presently he began to dry her foot with his handkerchief. It lay soft and white in his hand. She was sitting higher up on the bank, so that she looked down upon him.

"I like you better than Archie," she said slowly.

"W-w-why?" he stammered.

"You are so much more sensible."

"Sensible?"

"Yes. Archie," she blushed faintly, "and that stupid old Jim Corrance say they're in love with me. Isn't it absurd?"

Mark grew scarlet. He would have liked to say what Archie and Jim had said, but a lump in his throat made him speechless.

"I feel that you are a real friend," pursued Betty. "Now we must be getting home."

They set out slowly: Betty leaning on Mark's left arm and limping along in silence. Presently Mark became aware that she was leaning more heavily. Then he looked down upon a white, agonised face. They had just reached the small hill whereon The Whim is set. Mark wondered whether he could carry her to the summit of it. A feather-weight, this dainty creature, but Mark was no colossus like Archie. Still, exercise in the gymnasium and elsewhere had hardened his muscles. He bent down, picked her up, and breasted the hill. Her arms were round his neck; his arms held her body. But how heavy she grew with every step upward! How Mark's back and loins and legs ached! How his heart beat! But he reached the front door and set her down. And in the twilight she held up her face and kissed him.

"Now," she commanded, "run home before they open the door."

"Leave you? Not I."

He was proof against persuasion, and simulated anger. The Admiral must hear their misadventure from his lips.

"You obstinate wretch!" said Betty.

When the Admiral did hear the story, some three minutes later, he roared with laughter, although he grew

grave enough towards the end, and sent his butler, hot-foot, for the village doctor. Nor was Mark permitted to leave The Whim till that gentleman had pronounced the injury a trifling affair, which time and cold compresses would set right. At parting the Admiral admonished Mark solemnly.

"We must have no larks of this sort, my boy. What! *My* niece gallivanting about the downs with a lively young man! Miss Hazelby is inexpressibly shocked. A rod has been pickling the whole day, you may swear. And she says that you boys make love to the child. Do you?"

"I'd l-l-like to," said Mark abjectedly, "but I haven't yet."

The Admiral paced the room slowly, as if it were a quarter-deck. His grey beard lay upon his broad chest; his red weather-beaten countenance was heavy with thought.

"Look ye here," said he at length. "This is serious, and I take it seriously. I am tempted to call you a jackanapes. As it is, I prefer to say nothing, except this: you ought to be birched."

"I f-feel as if you were b-b-birching me."

His face relaxed.

"My boy, I'm sorry for you. You may not believe it, but when I was seventeen and in the Mediterranean squadron"—the Admiral's voice became reminiscent—

"I had the doose of an affair. I suffered like any Romeo, and my Juliet was only eight-and—er—twenty! Well, sir, I fought and conquered, and so must you, by God!"

"I have f-f-fought, sir; and I am c-c-conquered."

"You're glib with your tongue. I daresay Betty thinks you a tremendous fellow."

"She thinks us very s-s-silly."

"Us? Miriam Hazelby was right. The little baggage! A De Courcy from tip to toe already. Well, my boy, shake hands! You've made a clean breast of it, and I respect you for that. And you're in your salad days, too. So—no more! If you choose to sigh for the moon I can't prevent you. Good night."

Mark went home, humble as Uriah Heap. None the less, he made a tolerable dinner, and felt happy and hopeful after it. And that night he dreamed he was illustrious, a great soldier, a ruler amongst men. But, high though he climbed, aye, even to the Milky Way itself, where honours gleamed innumerable, he could not attain to the object of his dreams, the lovely Moon!

CHAPTER V.

VALETE.

IT was now definitely decided that Archibald Samphire must take Orders, and in due time hold the snug family living. The Squire, however, was of the opinion that Her Majesty's scarlet would mightily become his handsome second son, whereas the black of a country parson would do well enough for Mark. Archie, to his father's surprise, chose the sable instead of the gules. Amongst the Samphires it was a tradition that the second son always became a parson. Archie had a respect amounting to veneration for tradition.

"Suit yourselves," said the Squire of Pitt Hall to his sons. "I should have liked to have seen Archie on a charger."

"But what a leg for a gaiter," said Mark, hinting at episcopal honours.

Archibald was now a very big fellow indeed, so big that when he went in to bat at Lord's, as captain of the Harrow eleven, a small Eton boy, not far from Lord Randolph's coach, called out shrilly: "I say,

Samphire, how's your wife and family?" This was the famous year when Eton was beaten by five wickets, having suffered defeat during four previous summers. And the only thing that marred Archie's triumph was the fact that Mark, despite the services of a professional during the Easter holidays, had not a place in his eleven. On the eve of the great match one vacancy remained to be filled. It became certain that either Mark or Jim Corrance would fill it. Jim has confessed since with shame that he was miserably jealous of Mark, that for a dreadful three weeks this feeling strained their friendship. And he knew that Mark was the better cricketer; more, that Mark had made his friend a better cricketer, that Jim's understanding of and skill in the game were due to Mark's precept and practice. Mark would whip a cricket-ball out of his pocket, whenever five minutes could be spared, crying, "*Come on, old chap, you muffed an easy one yesterday—catch!*" And the ball would whizz at Jim's toes. But during the last trial match Mark fainted from the heat, and Jim took his place in the slips. That night Archie sent for Jim.

"You can get your flannels," he growled.

"But Mark——"

"Won't take 'em."

"Won't—take—'em?"

"He's right. He hasn't the strength. He might faint at Lord's. We can't run any risks."

Jim went back to his room—confounded. Mark met him and gripped his hands.

"You've g-got 'em," he cried. "I *am* glad. Isn't it glorious?"

"*Glorious?*"

Jim sat down and blubbered, like a Fourth Form boy.

However, it seemed certain then that another year would place Mark in the eleven, and also amongst the monitors, but this happy end to his Harrow career was not to be. Archibald, Jim, and he left Billy's at the end of the Easter term. In those days it was hardly possible for a boy to pass into Sandhurst direct from a public school. Billy said that Mark could do it—at the expense of his health; for extra subjects, like geometrical drawing, English literature, history, and so forth, would have had to be learned in addition to the regular school work, which in the Upper Sixth was as stiff as it could be.

"I'm very sorry to lose you," said Billy, when the brothers bade him good-bye. "Samphire senior's future I am not concerned about. But I do worry about you, Samphire junior, because you attempt too much, you—er—so to speak—strain at the camel and swallow the

gnat. Well, well," he fumbled with his glasses, "I should like to give you the benefit of my experience, but," he pursed up his lips, "I am not sanguine enough to hope that you will profit by it. Some excellent people think I take my duties too lightly. Perhaps I do, per—haps I do. A big house like this represents a force against which one individual is expected to pit his strength. But I realised long ago that what energy I could spare must of necessity prove—er—intermittent, the undisciplined, amorphous resistance would be constant. You—er—take me? Yes. So I governed myself accordingly. The great force which I was invited to control sways hither and thither, veering now to the right, and now—er—to the wrong. The swing of the pendulum, in fine. When it swings to the right I push it, so it swings a little farther; and when it swings the other way I pull behind, and perhaps it does not swing quite so far; but I don't try to stop the swing, because I know that such a feat is beyond my powers. I trust you are following me, Samphire junior. You, I fear, will recklessly expose yourself—and be rolled over, as happened in our house-match against Poodle's. There—I have warned you."

He signed to Archibald to remain behind. For a moment there was silence. Billy leaned back in his chair polishing the lenses of his pince-nez with a fine cambric handkerchief.

"If Mark had your body," he began absently, then, faintly smiling, he added: "Ah, what possibilities lie in that 'if,' which it were vain, quite vain to consider. Well, I hope that nothing will come between you and him, that your brotherly love, which has been a pleasant thing to witness, will continue to grow in strength. Mark has an extravagant affection for you—the greater because he does not wear it on his sleeve. Your success here has sweetened the bitterness of his many disappointments. You will get more from him than you give."

Archibald felt his cheek beginning to burn.

"Don't distress yourself on that account," said Billy kindly; "only take what he gives, *generously*, and so you will best help him to play his part in life."

After this interview followed the farewell supper in the common-room, with its toasts and speeches. Archie made certain that he would break down in his speech. And before the fags. He could see and hear the heartless little beasts snickering. As captain of the eleven and of the Philathletic Club, he was expected to speak about games; as a monitor, it was no less a duty to mention work. Finally he wrote out his speech and submitted it to Mark.

"Just what they'll expect," Mark observed. "You j-j-jolly well crack 'em up, and then let 'em down a peg or two. You tell 'em what they know already—

that Billy's is the best house in the school; and then you hope that it will remain so after you have left. No doubt without your moral and physical support, Billy's is likely to go to p-p-pot."

"You make me out an ass."

"Most Englishmen either grunt or bray when they get on to their legs to m-m-make a speech."

"And what are you going to say?"

"Nothing. Mum's the word for a stammerer. I shall bid 'em good-bye, that's all."

Thanks to Mark's criticism, Archie saw and seized an opportunity. He told the house he was convinced that its present prosperous condition was entirely due to his personal exertions, that he trembled for its future after he had left, that, if possible, he promised to run down from time to time for the purpose of giving advice to the Doctor, which he was sure would be appreciated—and so forth. Billy's roared with laughter, although the sneering voice of Nixon minimus was heard: "I say, he's trying to be funny!" When Archie sat down, the head of the house proposed Mark's health. The old common-room rocked with cheers. None doubted his popularity, but this deafening roar of applause lent it extraordinary significance, because such tributes were reserved for famous athletes, and for them alone.

"Thank you," he began; "thank you very much. I suppose you have believed all the p-pleasant things

that the head of the house has just told you about me . . .” Here a dozen voices interrupted, “Yes, we do;” “He didn’t lay it on thick enough;” “You’re a beast to leave us,” and the like. Mark continued, and in his voice there was a curious minor inflection which held attention and silence in thrall; “I am glad you believe them, although he has laid it on too thick. You see we can’t get away from f-f-facts, can we? And the fact is I’ve been a f-f-failure.” He paused. “I wanted to play in a cock-house m-match at footer; I w-wanted to w-win a school race; and I w-w-wanted—by Jove! how b-badly I w-wanted that—I wanted—a black and white straw.”*

“It was offered him,” said Archie.

“It was offered me,” repeated Mark. “And if I’d taken it, it might have p-proved the straw which breaks the camel’s back. Jim Corrance got it, and we know what back he broke—eh? The b-b-back of the Eton bowling.” (A terrible din followed, during which Billy appeared, holding up a protesting hand: “My dear fellows, unless you are more careful you will destroy this ramshackle house!”)

Meantime Mark had sat down, but every boy in Billy’s respected his silence. He did not wish them good-bye, because he couldn’t.

* The black and white straw hat only worn by members of the school cricket eleven.

CHAPTER VI.

AT BURLINGTON HOUSE.

You may divide the world into those who pipe and those who dance. The pipers, for the most part, envy the dancers; but many a dancer has confessed that the piper, after all, has the best of it.

Mark and Jim Corrance, at this period of their lives, were dancers to lively measures. They lived at home for a year, emancipated youths, enjoying the pleasures of Arcadia. Three times a week they rode across the grey, green downs, "that melt and fade into the distant sky," into Westchester, where a scholar of repute undertook their preparation for Sandhurst. Other days they worked at home, not too hard, and played lawn-tennis—a new game then—and practised arts which please country maidens, amongst whom Betty Kirtling was not. For the Admiral, having no stomach for immature Romeos, sent his niece abroad (in the company of Miss Hazelby) to Dresden and Lausanne, whence letters came describing queer foreign folk with sprightliness and humour, and always ending "your most affectionate, Betty."

As the months passed, Jim became aware how

strenuously Mark's heart was set on a soldier's career. One night, for instance, the young fellows were dining with the Randolphs at Birr Wood, when a famous general was present. Mark confessed himself aflame to meet the hero; and the hero, when he met Mark, became interested in him. Who shall say there is not some subtle quality, undetected by the common herd, which reveals itself to genius, because it is part, and not the least part, of genius? And you will notice that if a great man be speaking in general company, his eyes will wander here and there in search of the kindred soul, and when that is found, they wander no more. On this occasion a chance remark led the talk to India. Lord Randolph regretted that so brilliant a soldier as Hodson should have slain the Taimur princes with his own hand. The hero, who had known Hodson intimately, said that the princes had been given no assurance that their lives would be spared, and that their escape would have proved an immeasurable calamity. As he went on to speak of Nicholson and the siege of Delhi, the buzz of prattle round the big table ceased.

"He suffered excruciating pain" (the general was alluding to Nicholson), "but not a complaint, not a sigh, leaked from his lips. During nine awful days of agony, his heroic mind fixed itself upon the needs of his country, to the very last he gave us sound and clear advice. When he died, the grim frontier chiefs,

who had witnessed unmoved the most frightful atrocities, stood by his dead body with the tears streaming down their cheeks. . . .”

“What a man!” exclaimed Mark.

“Aye,” said the general. He stared at Mark, and continued, giving details of what followed the fall of Delhi. The speaker had marched with the column despatched to the relief of Cawnpore. “We could only spare,” said he, “seven hundred and fifty British and one thousand nine hundred native soldiers, and—let me see—how many field-guns?” He paused with his eyes still on Mark.

“Sixteen field-guns,” said Mark.

“Yes, you are right. Sixteen field-guns.” Then as he realised from whom he had received this piece of information, he broke into an exclamation: “God bless me! How did *you* know that?”

“I’ve read the d-despatches,” said Mark, blushing.

After dinner the general came up to Mark and asked him if he were going to be a soldier. On Mark’s eager affirmative, he said deliberately: “When you are gazetted, my boy, come to see me. I’d like to make your better acquaintance.”

For a week Mark could talk of nothing save the Indian Mutiny.

“You’re too keen,” said Jim. “Suppose we don’t pass?”

"Not p-p-pass? That's a dead certainty."

"If we did not pass——"

"We could enlist, Jim. I say, you're not going into the Service because, b-b-because I am?"

"You lit the match," Jim admitted. "A fellow must do something. Soldiering's as good as anything else."

"Ten times as good as anything else," Mark exclaimed.

Jim nodded, sensible that Mark cast a glamour over the future. As a child Jim could never listen to tales of smuggling, of hidden treasure, of Captain Kidd and the Spanish Main, without feeling a titillation of the marrow. And now that he was eighteen, with fluff on his lip, Mark could provoke this agreeable sensation whenever he pleased. That he could fire Jim was not surprising, for Jim was tinder to many sparks, but he could fire Archibald also.

"I back you to win big stakes," he would say. "W-w-what did the gipsy predict? You will g-get what you want, because you want it so badly. You've a leg for a g-g-gaiter. And your voice, your v-voice is amazing. I'd sooner hear you sing r-rot than listen to Lord Randolph talking s-sense. You must have the best of singing lessons. Why, you'll charm the b-birds off the trees."

Archie did take lessons; and began to warble at many houses ballads such as "'Twas in Trafalgar's day," "Sally in our Alley," and "I saw from the Beach

when the Morning was Shining." He grew bigger and stronger and handsomer every day, and Mark's pride in and affection for this splendid elder brother became something of a thorn in the side of his friend Jim. Mark had an ingenuous habit of putting wise words into the mouth of this Olympian. "Old Archie," he would observe, with a beaming face, "thinks so-and-so. . . ." Jim was sorely tempted to retort: "If old Archie thinks that, why the deuce doesn't he say it?" It was plain to Jim that Archie's brains were of a quality inferior to Mark's, but Mark would not allow this, and always waxed warm if anyone dared to speak slightly of the colossus. Archie, for his part, returned his junior's affection, and not only sought for, but accepted graciously that junior's advice.

A year later Mark and Jim went up to London for the competitive examination, lodging at a family hotel in Down Street, an old-fashioned inn where the name of Samphire was known and respected. The Squire offered to accompany them, but Mark begged him to stay at Pitt Hall. Mark and Jim unpacked their traps, and then looked out of the window over the great world of London.

"Too much smoke for me," said Jim, seeing nothing but dun-coloured roofs and chimney-pots innumerable.

"But think of the f-f-fires," said Mark, "and of the faces round the fires. I am sure I should learn to like

London, if it were not so beastly dirty. Why, there are smuts on my cuffs already."

They had a luncheon such as boys love: chops fizzing and sputtering from the gridiron, a couple of tankards of stout, a tart with Devonshire cream, and some Stilton cheese.

"Are you nervous?" said Mark.

Jim admitted a qualm or two.

"We ought to come out amongst the first twenty."

"If I am dead lag, I shall be jolly thankful," said Jim.

After lunch they took a turn down Piccadilly. Mark talked: "I say, what a glorious b-buzzing, like a swarm o' bees in June, and we're in the hive, eh?"

Presently they entered the Burlington Arcade, exchanging greetings with old school-fellows; some of them forlorn of countenance; others bubbling over with self-assurance. The Medical Board had to be passed that afternoon. Disjointed phrases flitted in and out of Mark's ear. "Not got a chance, I tell you, but it pleases my people to see me make an ass of myself—Fancy a rank outsider like that wanting to go into the Service—Yes; seventy-nine, not out—and first-class cricket—Who are those fellows with dirty collars?—If you try to crib and get nailed, you're done—Hullo, Samphire junior! you're going to pass in first, I know—I say, I saw your aunt the other day—What dead?—

And a jolly good thing, too—One of the biggest duffers in the school, I tell you—With windgalls and an awful splint—Played for the 'Varsity—And, as luck 'd have it, he hit her favourite cat——”

Outside the Arcade, they shook themselves free of the chatterers.

“I am in a beastly funk,” said Jim, as they went up the stairs of Burlington House.

“Funk of what?” Mark answered impatiently.

“I don't know,” Jim muttered vaguely.

They entered a long, ill-lighted room, and waited their turn. Boy after boy came out grinning, and buttoning up coat and waistcoat.

“Rather a farce this medical exam,” whispered Mark; and then, as he spoke, his voice broke into a stammer: “I s-s-say—w-w-who's this?”

A fellow they had known at Harrow was coming through the great double doors. His face was white as a sheet and his lips blue. He was hurrying by, when Mark called him by name.

“They won't have me,” he gasped. “I—I thought I was all right,” he added piteously, “but I ain't.”

“What's wrong?” said Mark.

“Heart. I asked 'em to tell me. They were rather decent, but I'm done. If you don't mind, I'll hook it now. No, don't come with me. I'm not as bad as that. Only it will, it may grow worse.”

He shambled away with the step of an old man. Mark's face was working with sympathy.

"How b-b-beastly!" he said. "And it m-m-might be one of us."

They passed through the doors into a larger room beyond. Here a score or more boys in all stages of dressing and undressing were dotting the floor. Near the window a big, burly man was testing the sight of a slender, round-shouldered youth. "How many fingers do I hold up?" Jim heard him say; and the unhappy youth replied: "Three!" The big man laughed grimly. "Wrong. Come a little nearer, and try again."

Jim was confoundedly pale.

"Pinch your cheeks," Mark whispered.

They were told to strip, and did so, but waited for some time, while the wind from an open window blew cold on their bare backs.

"Let's slip on our coats," Jim suggested.

"The others don't do it," said Mark, glancing at a row of shivering boys, "and we won't."

After what seemed an interminable interval, Jim's name was called. The doctor into whose hands he fell made short work of him. He clapped a stethoscope to his chest and back, looked at his legs, asked a few questions, and smiled pleasantly. "If you can see and hear, you're all right," said he. "*Next!*" Jim went back to where his clothes lay in a heap on the chair.

He knew that his sight and hearing were excellent; but why in the name of all that was hateful did not Mark come back? Half-way down the room Jim could see him, standing in front of a small, ferret-faced man, who was talking quickly. Now, Jim had not been asked to run round a table or to perform any other strange exercises, but Mark was treated less kindly. Jim saw him jump on and off a bench; then he began to run, and Jim caught the quick command: "Faster, sir, faster!" And then the stethoscope was laid upon his heaving chest. Jim watched the doctor's impassible face. Suddenly the doctor looked up and beckoned to the man who had examined Jim. The second doctor put his ear to the stethoscope.

"Catch him!" yelled Jim.

A hush fell upon the big room as Jim sprang forward, half clothed and choking with excitement. He had seen Mark quiver and reel, but the tall, thin doctor had seen it too. When Jim reached them, Mark was on his back on the big table. The ferret-faced man was smiling disagreeably, and tapping the palm of his hand with the end of his stethoscope.

"Absolutely unfit," Jim heard him say. "Not a surgeon in London would pass him."

"Not pass him?" Jim said furiously. "He's only fainted; he's done that before, that's nothing."

"Isn't it?" said the little man drily. Then he

added malevolently: "When I am ready to receive instruction from you, young sir, I will let you know."

When they got back to the hotel and were alone, Mark flung himself into an armchair. Presently he said quietly: "Let's get seats for the play;" so they walked as far as Mitchell's in Bond Street, and bought two stalls for the *Colleen Bawn*, in which Dion Boucicault was acting. Then they strolled on to Regent's Park. Not a word was said about what passed in Burlington House till they were crossing Portland Place, where a cousin of Mark's had a house.

"I shan't go back to Pitt Hall till your exam is over," Mark said. "I'd sooner stop up here with you."

"I don't care a hang about the exam now," Jim blurted out.

"I know you don't," Mark replied. "All the same, you must do your level best."

This calmness surprised Jim. But after the play, as they were strolling home through the crowded, gas-lit streets, Mark whispered fiercely: "I'd like to get drunk to-night."

"Let's do it," said Jim.

"Good old chap! Do you think I'd let you do it?" He glanced at a handsome roysterer, who was reeling by on the arm of a girl as reckless-looking as her companion. "I can guess how *they* feel, poor devils!"

"We'll have a nightcap, anyhow," said Jim.

So they turned into one of the Piccadilly bars, full of men and women, and ablaze with light reflected from a thousand glasses and mirrors. Mark had never set foot in a London bar at midnight. The roar of the voices, interpenetrated by the shrill laughter of the women, the clinking of glasses, the swish of silk petticoats, the white glare, the overpowering odours of the liquors and perfumes, the atmosphere hot on one's cheek—these smote him. Yet the sensation of violence was not unpleasant. He was sensible that he might yell if he liked, and that no one would heed him. They edged up to the bar, squeezing through the mob till they were opposite a young woman whose plain black dress and immaculate apron were crowned by a mop of chestnut hair.

"Why it's, it's Squeak," Jim said to Mark.

She recognised them at once.

"Hullo, Mr. Samphire junior, why ain't you in bed?"

They demanded whiskies and sodas.

"You can tell that 'andsome brother of yours that I'm here," said Squeak, as she pushed the drinks across the bar.

"I'll mention it to him," said Mark.

"I want to see him, to thank him. He got me this job. Don't worry! I mean that if I'd not got the chuck from Brown's I shouldn't be 'ere, but there. I've not

seen 'im. He's one of the kind that loves and runs away."

She laughed shrilly, staring with angry eyes at the young men. Her complexion had lost its freshness and delicacy; her eyes were no longer clear and bright. Mark's impassive face exasperated her.

"Tell 'im to send back all the 'air I gave 'im," she continued viciously.

"You have not quite so much left," said Mark.

"Don't look at me like that, you kid, you! I know you're thinking," she spoke very low, bending across the bar, "that I'm not any younger, or prettier, or better be'aved. Well, I ain't. And that's why I want to thank your brother."

"I shall not forget to tell him to come to see you."

"Oh! You think it will be safe enough, now?" Her cheeks were scarlet. Mark, without answering, dropped back into the crowd. By this time he was able to take note of his surroundings. Squeak, so to speak, had given him bearings. The faces, in relation to hers, had a certain resemblance, as if those present belonged to the same family. Next to Jim stood an obese individual, puffy of face, with thick, red lips shining through an oily, black beard. Jim felt a mad impulse to kick him on the shins. Beside him was a tall, thin youth of the type known in the seventies as the la-di-da young man. His pallid, clean-shaven face, his light-blue eyes, his closely cropped flaxen

hair, his delicate features were all in striking contrast to the other's gross, corpulent person. The hands of each were as different as could be: the man's short and thick, and none too clean, with a couple of big yellow diamonds blazing on them; the youth's long and thin, very white and bony, with polished nails. And yet the pair were as twins, for the same evil spirit leered out of their eyes.

"Come on," said Mark.

Outside the air was delightfully fresh and cool, but the crowd seemed to have thickened. A tremendous human tide ebbed and flowed between the tall, dark houses. Jim's eye caught a white feather in the hat of a girl, which tossed like foam upon troubled waters. Suddenly the fascination of the scene gripped him. This was London—*London*, the city of millions; and he stood on the pavement of its most famous thoroughfare, of it and in it, whether he loved it, feared it, or hated it. And at the moment, so overpowering was the sense of something new and strange and terrible that he could not determine whether his feeling for the capital of the world was one of attraction or repulsion.

Mark and he moved slowly on, till they came to the wall which encompasses Devonshire House. At the corner stood a huge policeman, grimly impassive, one of London's hundred thousand warders, and an epitome of all.

"When is closing time?" said Mark to the constable.

"Quarter-past twelve, sir."

Mark looked at his watch.

"Five minutes more. I'm going back."

"Where?"

"To that girl, Squeak."

"What on earth for?"

"I spoke brutally. I shall beg her p-pardon. Don't come with me!"

"You're as mad as a hatter."

Jim went on to Down Street, ascended the stairs, and began to undress, thinking of two things which obliterated all others—the slender figure of Mark when it reeled back into the arms of the tall, thin surgeon, and the white feather wavering hither and thither above the turbulent crowd.

Half an hour passed, and Mark did not return. Jim grew apprehensive. If Mark had fainted—if he had fallen into coarse, gross hands. Then he thought of the colossus at the corner of Devonshire House, and took comfort in him, the Argus-eyed, the omnipresent and omnipotent.

"Not in bed yet?" said Mark.

"By Jove, here you are! I saw you trampled under foot."

"I'm glad I went back. The girl's a good sort—

silly, vain, terribly ignorant, but not without heart. I promised to see her again. It wouldn't be a b-bad bit of work to get her out of that hell."

"You're a rum 'un," said Jim, for since they had parted Mark's face had resumed its natural expression: that look of joyousness which redeemed the harsh features and sallow skin.

"A rum 'un, why?"

"Well, I supposed, you know, that you'd be thinking just now of, of yourself."

"I'm rather s-sick of that subject."

He flung off his clothes and turned out the gas. Jim slipped into bed in the adjoining room. He couldn't sleep for an hour or two, wondering whether Mark would break down when he found himself alone, listening with ears attuned to catch the lightest sigh. To his astonishment, Mark breathed quietly and regularly. He must be asleep. Jim waited for another ten minutes; then he slipped out of bed. The moon was throwing a soft radiance upon Mark's figure. He lay flat on his back, with his arms straight at his side. *He was smiling!* But his fists were clenched, and the jaw below the parted lips stood out firm, square, and aggressive. . . .

Jim watched him lying thus for several minutes; then he stole back to bed, no longer a boy, but a man. By many, doubtless, the step between boyhood and

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manhood is taken at random, and forgotten as soon taken; or it escapes observation altogether. But Jim was shown, as in a vision, the past and the future: the green playing-fields, the happy lanes of childhood, and beyond—the hurly-burly, the high winds and whirling dust-clouds, the inexorable struggle for and of Life.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HUNT BALL.

AT Harrow, Mark had been told by the drawing-master that he had great talent as a draughtsman, and possibly something more. The vague "something more" kindled possibilities which smouldered, and burst into flame when the doctors at Burlington House pronounced him unfit to serve his sovereign. The Squire suggested the Bar, a bank, or a junior partnership in a brewery. Mark shook his head. Briefs—supposing they came to him—bullion, beer, left fancy cold. But to paint a great picture, to interpret by means of colour a message vital to the world, this indeed would be worth while!

Mrs. Samphire bleated dismay and displeasure; but much to the Squire's surprise, Lady Randolph sustained Mark's choice of art as an avenue to success.

"Fame's temple," she said, "lies in the heart of a maze to which converge a thousand paths—most of 'em

blind alleys. Mark may try one path after another, but in the end—in the end, mind you—he will choose the right one.”

After a few months' work in South Kensington, Mark went to Paris, where he became a pupil of the famous Saphir at the École des Beaux Arts. Saphir looked at his studies and shook his head. He was of opinion that Mark had better join Julian's for a year; the standard at the Beaux Arts was very high. Mark showed his disappointment.

“Oh, monsieur, I am so anxious to be under you.”

“Have you no better reason than that?” said the great man.

“Our n-n-names are alike,” stammered Mark.

“*Tiens!* Any reason is better than none. *Samphire et Saphir.*”

“And the l-l-less,” said Mark, “includes the g-g-greater.”

Saphir laughed at the compliment, and told Mark he might join his *atelier*. “Only you must work—work—work. That is my first word to you—work!”

Mark worked furiously. Many well-informed persons believe that an art student's life in Paris (particularly that part of Paris which lies on the left bank of the Seine) is a sort of carnival—a procession up and down the Boul' Mich', varied by frequent excursions to the Moulin Rouge and other places of entertainment in

Montmartre. Of the unremitting labour, of the grinding poverty, of the self-denial cheerfully confronted by the greater number, an adequate idea perhaps may be gleaned from Zola's *L'Œuvre*, which sets forth, photographically and pathologically, French art life as it is. *L'Œuvre*, however, deals with the struggle for supremacy between the academic and the "*plein air*" schools. When Mark entered the Beaux Arts, this struggle, although not at an end, had become equalised, the balance of power and popularity lying rather with the *plein air* party, of which Saphir was the bright particular star. Saphir introduced Mark to Pynsent, then considered one of the rising men. Born in the East of America, related on his mother's side to two of the Brook Farm celebrities, Pynsent had renounced a promising career as a lawyer in the hope of making his fortune out West. In California he lost what money he possessed trying to develop a "salted mine." Then he "taught school" for bread and butter—a foothill school on the slopes of the Santa Lucia mountains, where the pupils were the children of squatters, and "Pikers," and greasers. Here he found his true vocation. For a couple of years he denied himself the commonest comforts, living on beans for the most part, saving his pitiful salary. Then he worked his passage round the Horn in a sailing-ship, and began at thirty years of age to draw from plaster casts. Since, he had taken most

of the prizes open to foreigners at the École des Beaux Arts.

Pynsent found Mark a lodging and studio in the Rue de l'Ancienne Comédie, not far from the famous Café Procope, the café of Voltaire and Verlaine. With Pynsent as guide, he learned to know Paris—the Paris of the Valois and Bourbon, the Paris of the Terror, of the Empire, and of the Republic. Pynsent had a prodigious memory, and an absorbing passion for colour. He was always hopeful, generous, proud, inordinately ambitious, and willing to sacrifice everything to his art. He exercised an enormous influence upon Mark, making plain to him the virtue which underlies so much that is vile and vicious on the surface.

"Men fail here," said he, "not so much from incapacity as ignorance. I could not interpret Paris to you or to myself had I not served my apprenticeship in California. Because my energies were misdirected there, I have learned to direct them here. Great Cæsar's ghost! What mistakes I have made. But you can bet your life that the fellow who makes no mistakes is either a parasite or a jelly-fish. Tell me what a man's mistakes are, and I'll tell you what he is."

"Am I making a mistake?" said Mark.

He had worked, furiously, as has been said, for two years. Pynsent smoked his cigarette for a full

minute before he replied: "I don't know yet. I shall know soon."

"When you do know, tell me," said Mark.

Meanwhile Archibald Samphire was occupying a corner of that famous court of Trinity College where Byron, Newton, Macaulay—and how many more?—have kept their terms. Archie was considered by impartial judges to be a distinguished young man. A "double blue," he represented his University at cricket and as a runner; he was certain to take a good degree; he could sing charmingly; he was handsome as Narcissus. At the end of the second year's work in Paris, Mark and Archie and Jim Corrance made a tour in France, with the intention of visiting the Gothic cathedrals; but, as a rule, after the dust and glare of the French roads, both Archie and Jim Corrance would seek and find some cool *café*. Mark, however, would hurry off to the nearest church, and return raving of foliations and triforia and clerestories—empty words to Philistines, but to him documents of surpassing interest. Archibald was going to take Orders, not swerving by a hand's breadth from his goal; but Jim, after a year at Sandhurst, had resigned his commission.

"I'm no soldier," he told Mark. "I went up for my exam because you fired me. I want to make money, a big pile." Mark said nothing, but he thought of Betty Kirtling, now eighteen, and still abroad. Jim had

mentioned (with a flushed cheek) that Betty was coming out at the Westchester Hunt Ball, always held in New Year's week, and Mark had said that he would assist at that and other festivities.

When Christmas came Mark crossed the Channel. He brought Pynsent with him as a guest. Mark was now twenty-two, but he looked older. You must imagine a long, thin, sallow face, illumined by two splendid blue eyes and a wide mouth filled with white even teeth. The hair was dark brown, and the eyebrows were arched, like the eyebrows of the poet Shelley. His nose was too long—so Pynsent said—and the chin was too prominent, the eyes set too far apart, the brow too wide. For the rest the figure was tall and slight, with finely shaped extremities. Curiously enough, although ninety-nine out of a hundred persons would have pronounced Mark a plain man; yet, dressed in petticoats, judiciously painted and bewigged, he made a captivating woman. At a dance in one of the studios, he impersonated an American heiress with so much spirit and appreciation of the attention he received, that before the night was out he had promised to become the wife of an impoverished French count: a prank provoking a challenge, which Mark accepted and which doubtless would have ended in a duel, had not Pynsent explained to the victim of the joke that if Mark was killed, the slayer of so popular a person would have to

fight his friends, man by man, till not one Englishman or American was left alive in Saphir's studio. "It is the woman in Mark's face," said Pynsent, "which gives it charm and quality; but the man, strong and ardent, looks out of his eyes."

Mark did not meet Betty till the night of the Hunt Ball. He was standing beside Archie and Pynsent, as she entered the room.

"Great Scott! here's Beatrice Cenci," said Pynsent.

The artist was thinking of the fascinating portrait which hangs in the Barberini Palace, not of the wooden counterfeit presentment so familiar to buyers of cheap chromo-lithographs.

"It's our Betty," said Archie.

"As if it could be anybody else," Mark added.

Betty advanced, tall and slim and pale: her great hazel eyes sparkling with pleasure and excitement. Beside her, beaming with pride, walked the grey-headed, grey-bearded Admiral; behind came two nice-looking youths, fingering their highly glazed programmes and gazing at the milk-white neck and shoulders in front of them. The big room was full of people: men in the "pink" of four hunts, officers in scarlet, officers in dark green and silver, dignitaries of the Church, bland and superior; lesser luminaries, such as canons and arch-leacons; masters from the college, and the sisters and

wives and cousins of these. A roving eye might detect the difference between those of the county and those of the town, dividing the latter again into those of the barracks, the close, and the college; and a stranger might have whiled away the evening, even if he did not dance, by noting the subtler distinction between the wife of a rural dean and the mistress of a country vicarage, or between Lady Randolph, the wife of the Lord-Lieutenant, and Lady Bellowes, whose husband was a baronet of recent creation.

The first dance had just come to an end, so the floor was comparatively clear for the passage of Betty and her squires. Archibald went forward, smiling, to greet her, followed by Mark and Jim Corrance.

"I've saved three dances apiece for you," said Betty.

One of the young men behind, Lord Kirtling's eldest son, protested loudly: "Oh, I say—and I'm a cousin."

"A cousin!" cried Betty gaily. "Why, these are my best and oldest friends. We've sucked the same acidulated drop."

Mark introduced Pynsent. Then Lord Randolph came up; and Betty was escorted in triumph to the corner sacred to the magnates, where her card was almost torn in pieces by the young men.

"Never saw such a pair," said Pynsent to Mark, indicating Archie and Betty.

Archibald, in the scarlet coat with white facings of the Quest Hunt, was standing beside Betty, who wore a pearly brocade embroidered with true lovers' knots.

"Dear old Archie looks splendid," said Mark.

A set of lancers was being formed. Mrs. Samphire, discovering that Mark had no partner, begged him to sit down beside her. The years which had passed since she married the Squire had turned her from a thin, prim, slightly acidulous spinster into a plump, smirking matron, whose skin seemed too tight for her face, even as her bodice seemed too tight for her figure. A voluble talker, she was never known to listen to any person save her superior in position or rank. Lady Randolph's lightest words she cherished and generally repeated afterwards—as her own.

"I've hardly had time to say anything to you," she bleated. "How well Archibald looks to-night! It distresses me dreadfully to think that he will never wear pink again. Betty is very handsome. What do you say? A beauty? No, no. I can't agree with you. And I always admire blondes. All the Lambs are blondes."

"No black sheep in your family?" said Mark. Lady Randolph, who was near, smiled.

"Black sheep? Never! Dear me! Who is that? Oh, Harry Kirtling. What a nice-looking young fellow!

One guesses why he is here. Our dear Admiral is anxious to see a coronet on his niece's head. Don't move, Mark! Ah! there is Lady Valence and her blind husband. Do tell me—I am so shortsighted—who is that very common young man with them? What? Oh, oh, indeed! The Duke of Brecon! I must say a word to dear Lady Valence."

She bustled across the room. Mark turned to Lady Randolph.

"Have you any m-m-mint s-sauce? There is s-something about all the Lambs which——"

"Does not bring out our great qualities," said Lady Randolph. "See! She has put the Duke to rout, and he is going to take refuge with me."

Mark glanced up, noting that the Duke's feet were flat and turned out at an absurd angle, giving him a shuffling and awkward gait.

"He is a better fellow than he looks," whispered Lady Randolph.

"Will you do me a favour, Lady Randolph?" The Duke's voice was very pleasant. "Perhaps you can guess the nature of it?"

"An introduction to Miss Kirtling, of course."

"Of course," he repeated, laughing.

The lancers were just over, and across the room Mark could see Betty and Pynsent deep in conversation. Pynsent, he had heard women say, was a fascinating

man, the more so because heretofore he had been proof against the assaults of the fair. Hullo! Lady Randolph was crossing the floor with her Duke—confound him! And now Betty was smiling at him. Yes, he had secured a dance; somebody else's probably. What an insufferable silly grin he had! Jim Corrance interrupted his thoughts.

"I say, Mark—isn't Betty a wonder?"

Jim began to rave about her. The Duke and Lady Randolph passed on; Betty leant back in her chair, while Pynsent talked. It seemed to Mark that Pynsent was making the effort of his life.

"I'm glad you brought Pynsent from Paris," Jim was saying. "It will do him good. Like all Americans who live in Paris, he is ignorant of the best side of English life. Eventually he must settle in London. And he'll paint the portraits of all the swells. He tells me that already he's in love with——"

"Betty!" exclaimed Mark.

"With my mother," said Jim, grinning.

Mark was dancing the next valse, and had to seek his partner, who—it is to be feared—did not find him as agreeable as usual. Moreover, she too prattled of Betty, of the great match she ought to make, and so forth. Fortunately a polka gave an opportunity of letting off steam. After that, and a cooling glass of claret-cup, Mark felt more hopeful and in better humour. Indeed,

by the time his dance with Betty was due, he was himself, and beginning to enjoy the ball.

"Your friend, Mr. Pynsent, is perfectly delightful," began Betty.

"I thought you found him so."

Betty smiled demurely.

"He talked in the most interesting way about——"

"Himself," said Mark.

"No."

"About you?"

"Wrong again! He talked, nearly all the time, about a dear friend of mine whom I had not seen for years."

"I suppose you have dear friends in every town in Europe," said Mark.

The shameless coquette nodded. How her eyes sparkled.

"And who is this dear friend Pynsent knows?"

"Mr. Pynsent was talking about *you*," said Betty.

"Betty, dear, forgive me! I am an ass, a silly, jealous ass. And seeing you to-night I—I——"

A kind pair of eyes warned him to say no more. For a moment there was silence. Then—they fell to talking of the old days, capping stories, and laughing at ancient jokes. When Mark left her in the hands of her next partner, he was more in love than ever, and knew that Betty knew it, and that the knowledge was

not displeasing to her. And she had made plain, without words, that this meeting of friends had stirred her to the core, quickening all those generous emotions of childhood which older people are constrained sorrowfully to stifle and destroy. While Mark was sitting beside her he realised how little she had changed from the girl who had played truant on the Westchester Downs, and yet between them lay a blackthorn fence of convention and tradition.

Meantime he danced gaily every dance, and at the end of the ball got into a dogcart to drive home with Pynsent, feeling, perhaps, more alive than he had ever felt before. Pynsent offered him a cigar, and lighted one himself.

"This Hunt Ball has been a new experience," Pynsent said, as the cart rolled up the High Street. "And it means work. Lady Randolph has commissioned a portrait. I go on to Birr Wood after leaving you."

"If you satisfy her, Pynsent, she can help you enormously. She knows all the right people."

He heard Pynsent's pleasant chuckle.

"The right people.' I always scoffed at that phrase. But I found out what it means to-night. Well, I hope to satisfy Lady Randolph. What I see I can paint. I wonder if Miss Kirtling would sit. Would you ask her?"

"Can you see her?"

"The finer lines are blurred. I might fail on that account. It would be no small thing to set on canvas the 'unexpectedness' of her face. She's going to surprise all of you before she's many years older."

"She will marry a swell and become like everybody else," said Mark nervously.

"A marriage of convenience! That would indeed be surprising. No, no; she is likely to marry the wrong man, but not from any ignoble motive; she is capable of a great passion, which, mind you, is more physical than mental, nine times out of ten. I'd like to make a study of her for a head of Juliet, but I should want her to be thinking of Romeo, who, I take it, has not yet made her acquaintance."

Mark shuffled uneasily, and began to drive a willing horse too fast.

"My brother, Archie, will sit as Romeo."

"Ah! When they were standing together to-night, somehow I thought of Verona at once."

"Pynsent," said Mark desperately, "I may as well tell you that I—I l-l-love Betty Kirtling. I loved her when she was a b-baby. I loved her when she was a g-girl. And it all came back to-night. There never has been anyone else."

"Um," said Pynsent.

"Tell me frankly what's in your m-mind."

"I'm trying to fit you into it, as Romeo."

"I'm an imbecile, of course, but I f-feel like Romeo. There, it's out."

"So is your cigar. Take a pull on yourself, man, and on that horse, too! You're not an imbecile. Alps lie between you and Miss Kirtling, but the Alps have been scaled before and will be again."

"If I could paint a great picture——"

Pynsent was silent.

Mark continued keenly: "And I feel in all my bones that I shall get there, as you put it, with both feet. I say, you're not very encouraging."

"You must try for this next Salon."

No more was said. But when Mark found himself alone in the room at Pitt Hall which he always used, he lit the candles on each side of the old-fashioned mirror. Then he examined himself, frowning.

"Romeo?" he exclaimed disgustedly. "Good heavens!"

CHAPTER VIII.

BARBIZON.

AFTER the Hunt Ball Betty Kirtling was whisked away on a round of visits. Jim Corrance accepted a clerkship in a big firm on the Stock Exchange. Archibald was reading hard for his degree. Mark returned to Paris and work.

Acting under Saphir's advice, he went to Barbizon with the intention of painting a picture for the Salon. In those days every man who went to Barbizon painted one picture at least in accordance with certain well-defined Barbizonian rules. At the top of the canvas was a narrow strip of sky put on boldly with big brushes and a palette-knife. Invariably, the sky was of a tender, pinky-grey complexion, hazy, but atmospheric, hall-marked, so to speak, by Bastien Lepage. Below this strip of opalescent mist, in solid contrast, were painted the roofs of the village. These, too, were handled capitably even by the beginners. The foreground represented a field full of waving grasses, grasses from which the sun had sucked the chlorophyl, leaving them pale and attenuated. In this field grew one tree, looking

much the worse for wear. Under the tree sat or stood a woman, a peasant wearing the *coiffe* of the commune and heavy sabots. This woman always had a complexion of the colour and texture of alligator-skin, and her back was bowed by excessive labour. A pretty maid waiting for her lover would have been deemed rank blasphemy against the traditions of the place where the "Angélus" of Millet had been conceived and painted.

Mark worked hard at just such a picture during half of January and the whole of February. A dozen friends were painting similar masterpieces in a fine frenzy of open-air excitement. Saphir himself was at Gretz, but he came over to Barbizon, breakfasted *chez* Siron, and examined his pupils' canvases with kindly, twinkling eyes. Then he went back to Gretz.

"He says we are all monkeys," observed a big Canadian.

"So we are," cried Mark. "We're trying to copy what one man has done s-s-superlatively well."

Later, he took the Canadian aside. Saphir had talked alone to him; and Mark had overheard his own name.

"What did he say to you about m-m-me?"

"Oh, nothing."

"I w-want the facts."

"Well, he did ask me if you had private means, and told him your father made you a good allowance."

"Go on!"

"And—and he said that was fortunate. Of course he meant that—er—it takes time to arrive, eh?"

"Quite so. A lifetime if you happen to choose the wrong r-road."

About the beginning of March Pynsent arrived from England.

"I've caught on," he told Mark. "I shall certainly take a studio somewhere in Kensington. Lady Randolph has found me a score of patrons. What are you doing?"

Mark produced his big canvas. Pynsent stared at it, pursing up his lower lip and frowning. Mark's hopes oozed from every pore. The picture exhibited pitiful signs of excessive labour. Pynsent obtained his best effects with bits of pure colour laid on with amazing precision. Mark's colour looked like putty.

"Are they all as ugly as that?" said Pynsent, indicating the model.

"I got the ugliest in the v-v-village. There's a lot in her face."

"A lot of dirt."

"I don't allow her to wash it. Can you read her l-life's history?"

"I'm hanged if I can."

"You see n-nothing in her eyes?"

"Nor in her mouth. She's lost all her teeth."

"Knocked out by a b-brutal husband," said Mark, grinning, but ill at ease beneath Pynsent's chaff.

"What are those stains on the apron—red paint?"

"Sheep's blood. I rubbed it on myself."

Pynsent roared; he was not a Barbizonian.

"Great Scott! You fellows take yourselves seriously."

"Honestly," said Mark. "What d'ye think of it?"

"It's good, in streaks," said Pynsent solemnly. Then his eyes flashed. "Look here, Mark, they won't hang that. But I've told Lady Randolph and Miss Kirtling that you will have a 'machine' in the Salon. Now, have you the pluck to scrape this and paint it out, *to-night?*"

"Yes," said Mark.

Next day Pynsent led the way into the forest of Fontainebleau, Mark following like a faithful spaniel. They walked for miles. Finally, Pynsent discovered a bank of cool-looking sand in the heart of a pine wood; upon the sand were wonderful shadows and reflections.

"*Voilà notre affaire!*" exclaimed Pynsent.

"But the m-model——"

"I have wired to Paris. These Barbizon peasants make me tired."

That evening the model arrived, a girl. Within twelve hours Mark was at work. Pynsent posed the girl upon the bank. She sat with her elbows on her knees

and her face between her hands, staring helplessly and hopelessly out of an unknown world.

"We'll call it '*Perdue*,'" said Pynsent. "The subject is trite, but the treatment will redeem that. I spotted that girl last year in the Rue du Chat qui Pêche. Aren't her eyes immense?"

Mark protested in vain. Pynsent ordered him to begin work. In eight days the picture was painted. Pynsent had not laid a brush upon it, but Mark was miserably conscious that his friend's genius informed almost every stroke. For hours Pynsent stood at his side, exhorting and encouraging.

"It's really good," said Pynsent, after he had forbidden his pupil to add another touch.

"But it's not m-m-mine, Pynsent."

"What?"

"I couldn't have p-painted it without you."

"Pooh!"

At Siron's Mark's friends predicted success, a place on the line, honourable mention, a prize, possibly. Saphir saw it and whistled.

"You painted that, you?"

They were standing in the dining-room, panelled with studies, some of them signed by famous men. Mark's friends were all present, and in the background Madame Siron smiled genially, murmuring that monsieur certainly must add a tiny sketch to her little collection.

Mark glanced from face to face. The general expression was not to be misinterpreted. In the eyes of those present he had "arrived."

"*Tiens!*" said Saphir; "it is not signed. You must sign it, *mon garçon.*"

A bystander produced a brush and palette.

"It grows upon one," said Saphir, shading his eyes. "He has lots to learn in technique, but the feeling which cannot be imparted is there. *Saperlipopette!* It brings tears to the eyes. And look you," he addressed Pynsent and Mark in broken English, "I am not easily moved—I! When I lose a friend of ze blood—how do you call it?—a relation, yes, ze tears do not come—no! And when I hear Wagner—*zoum, zoum, zoum*—ze tears do not come, no! But when I hear Rossini, Bellini—rivers, *mes amis*, rivers!" With a large gesture he indicated a tropical downpour; then he continued: "It is ze melodie. Is it not so, *mes enfants!*"

He appealed to the circle around him. Mark listened; stupefied, to a clamour of congratulation.

"Sign it—sign it!" they cried.

Mark took the brush with a queer smile upon his wide mouth. The others fell back to give him room.

"*Dieu de Dieu!*" ejaculated Saphir.

Mark had copied cleverly Pynsent's bold signature; below it in small script was: "*per M. S.*"

Pynsent bit his lip, frowning. The others stared at

Mark, who met the startled interrogation of their raised brows with a nervous laugh.

"The f-f-feeling you speak of," he turned to Saphir, "is his," he indicated Pynsent. "I cannot s-send it to the Salon as my work, but I shall k-keep it and v-value it as long as I live."

Saphir held out his hand.

"My friend," he said in his own tongue, "if you were not an Angliche, I should ask to have the honour of embracing you."

"He's a quixotic fool," Pynsent growled; "I never touched the canvas."

The others vanished, put to flight by an intuition that something was about to happen. Mark addressed Saphir.

"When you were here last you s-said to a friend of mine that it was fortunate for me that I had private means. You are my master; you have seen everything I have done. This, you understand, does not c-c-count. Pynsent knows my work, too, every line of it. I ask you both: Am I w-w-wasting my time?"

Neither answered.

"No mediocre success will content me," continued Mark. "I ask you again: Am I w-w-wasting my time?"

"Yes," said Saphir gruffly. He put on his hat and went out.

"He's not infallible," Pynsent muttered angrily.

"Then you advise me to g-go on? No; you are too honest to do that. I shall not go on, Pynsent; but I don't regret the last three years. They would have been wasted indeed if they had b-b-blinded me to the truth concerning my powers."

"What will you do, Mark?"

"I don't know, yet," said Mark.

Mark returned to England, where he learned of Betty's conquests. The Duke of Brecon, so Lady Randolph told him, had to marry a million, otherwise he might have offered Miss Kirtling the strawberry leaves. Harry Kirtling, the cousin, very handsome, and a passionate protester, wooed in vain, much to the Admiral's dismay, a dismay tempered by Betty's assurance that she did not wish to leave her uncle for many a long year. A prosperous rector proposed in a letter which began: "My dear Miss Kirtling,—After much earnest thought and fervent prayer, I write to entreat you to become my wife. . . ." This gentleman was a widower on the ripe side of forty. Pynsent, too, confessed that had he not been bound to Art, he might have become Betty's slave.

Mark saw her on the day when she was presented at Court, on the day when she held a small court herself at Randolph House, after she had kissed her sovereign's hand. Mark went away from Belgrave Square

very sorrowful, because Betty seemed so rich and he was so poor.

About this time he met the future Bishop-Suffragan of Poplar, David Ross, then head of the Camford Mission. A man of extraordinary personal magnetism, Ross had begun by challenging public attention as the champion middle-weight boxer of his year. He possessed a small deer-forest in Sutherland and abundant private means; but, to the amazement of his friends, he took Orders and accepted a curacy in the East End. His lodge in Sutherland was turned into a sanatorium, whither were sent at his expense clergymen who had broken down in health. David Ross had the highlander's prophetic faculty and intuition. Where others crawled, he leaped to conclusions respecting his fellow-creatures. When he met Mark, for instance, he divined his mental condition: the suffering denied expression, the disappointment, the humiliation. But he divined far more—something of which Mark himself was unconscious: a religious mind, religious in the sense in which Bishop Butler interpreted the word, submissive to the will of God. This quality in combination with a passionate energy and determination to win his way arrested Ross's attention and captivated his interest. He asked Mark to become a guest at the Mission.

Here the almost invincible odds against which a dozen men were struggling whetted to keen edge Mark's

vitality and love of fighting. Listening to David Ross, it seemed incredible that he should have pinned his ambition to the painting of a picture. At the end of a couple of months' hard work in the slums he said abruptly to Ross: "If I can overcome my confounded stammer, I shall take Orders."

Ross held his glance.

"Do nothing rashly," he said gravely.

Time, however, strengthened Mark's resolution. He set to work to overcome his stammer. When he told his family of his intention to take Orders, each member in turn protested.

"You, a parson?" The Squire was scarlet with surprise.

"There is only one living," bleated Mrs. Samphire.

"Oh, I sha'n't compete with old Archie," said Mark, smiling.

Lady Randolph, however, said to Betty: "He is the right man to lead—*lead*, mind you—forlorn hopes."

"And be killed," Betty answered vehemently.

"I don't think he will be killed, my dear."

For many months after this he worked with Ross, seeing but little of his family and friends.

In the following February the Admiral died after a short sharp attack of pneumonia. Mark attended his funeral, and exchanged a few words with Betty,

to whom was left everything the kind, eccentric old man possessed. Betty broke down when she saw Mark's sympathetic face. She had nursed her uncle faithfully; she had loved him very dearly; she realised that she was alone in a world which held pain as well as pleasure. Mark tried to comfort her.

"You have so many friends, Betty."

"Friends?" She smiled through her tears. "Friends are like policemen—always round the corner when most wanted. I might want you, and you—you—would be somewhere in Whitechapel."

Mark opened his mouth, and shut it again resolutely.

During that week he saw her twice. It was settled that The Whim should be let till she came of age; Betty living, meanwhile, with her guardian and trustee, Lady Randolph. Miriam Hazelby helped Betty to pack up the Admiral's china, and, when Mark called, played watchdog. She liked Mark and respected him; but she respected also the late Admiral's wishes. Mark noted that Miss Hazelby's affection and sympathy for Betty did not obscure her powers of observation.

"Betty," she said to Mark, "has a mind which till now has been a sundial: recording only the bright hours. I confess that I am anxious about her. When I left her I told the Admiral that she carried too much

sail and not enough ballast. As a seaman he approved my trite little metaphor."

Mark began to praise Betty.

"Oh," said Miss Hazelby drily, "she has been fortunate in knowing good people to whose standard she tries to attain. It has been easy for her to avoid evil in King's Charteris, but in Belgrave Square——"

The excellent lady sniffed.

"Lady Randolph will keep an eye on her," said Mark.

"She'll need both eyes," retorted Miss Hazelby.

CHAPTER IX.

AT KING'S CHARTERIS.

Two years later, in April, Mark Samphire preached his first sermon at King's Charteris. He had wrestled with his stammer as Christian did with Apollyon, and he told Archie that he had reason to believe it was mastered when the brothers met at Pitt Hall upon the Saturday preceding Mark's appearance in the village pulpit.

"I passed some severe tests, before they admitted me to deacons' orders," he said.

Archie stared curiously at an unfamiliar Mark. "You don't look very fit."

"I've been like a bird in the hand of a fowler, a fluttering tomtit trying to escape. Ross rescued me. You must get to know Ross: he's a splendid fellow. I've talked to him a lot about you."

Archibald nodded, well pleased to find Mark's eyes lingered upon his handsome face and imposing figure with the same pride and affection as of yore. But he was conscious also of a mental change in his brother,

divined rather than apprehended. Mark spoke with enthusiasm of work in congested districts, he gave lamentable details, he indicated colossal difficulties.

"And this sort of thing satisfies you?" said Archie heavily. "Although, as I take it, the results are invisible. I like to see results. I keep a diary of results. You were telling me just now of the difficulties of dealing with a shifting population: the people, for instance, round the London Docks. I couldn't undertake that sort of work."

"You want to count your sheaves," said Mark.

"I am ambitious," Archie admitted. "Aren't you?"

"Oh, yes. If I told you that I felt it in me to become a preacher, you would laugh perhaps."

"You've always had plenty to say, Mark."

"And if, one day, I could stand in the pulpit of such a fane as Westchester, if——"

"Why not?" said Archie.

"I try not to think of that. But those spires and pinnacles—I see them as in a vision."

"What will be your text to-morrow?"

"That verse from Isaiah: '*A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest.*' I shall not touch upon the prophetic interpretation. I want to show that any man, the humblest and weakest, may prove a shelter to others."

Archie caught his enthusiasm.

"It is in you, Mark."

"In me, yes; but suppose it won't come out."

"Do you know that Betty Kirtling is here?"

"Here?" He turned to hide his flushed cheeks.

"She is with Mrs. Corrance. We are asked to lunch there to-morrow. I accepted for you. Betty ran down from town yesterday on purpose to hear your first sermon."

"Oh!"

"It's a great compliment; for she has become a much-sought-after person. I see her name continually in the papers. Lady Randolph tells me that you refuse all invitations to Randolph House. Is that wise?"

"Wise?" Mark laughed, and thrust out a lean leg. "Is this a leg for a gaiter?"

"That joke is worn threadbare," said Archie, with a slight frown. "I can't see why your work should cut you off from old friends who have your welfare at heart. Lord Randolph got me my present curacy. He would do as much and more for you."

"I shall certainly stick to Ross."

Next morning Mark rose early after an uneasy and almost sleepless night. He had been obsessed by a spirit of Betty. Whenever he closed his eyes she came to him. "She is the creature of my dreams," he told himself impatiently. None the less she dominated his waking hours, she stood behind that ever-increasing

hope of becoming a great preacher. He had consumed gallons of midnight oil in the composition of sermons declaimed in unfrequented spots of Victoria Park. Now, the thought of preaching to the woman he loved filled him with bitter-sweet excitement. He dressed and went out into the park. Presently he came to an elm out of which flew some jackdaws chattering volubly. Their harsh notes brought back a morning when Archie and he, small schoolboys, had scaled this very tree in search of jackdaws' eggs. Yes; there was the hole, high up, out of which Archibald by his superior height and strength had secured the spoil.

Mark sat down, despite the protests of the jackdaws, and faced his thoughts. The talk with Archie of the night before came back to him. He had heard Archie preach. Archie's matter, perhaps, to the critical mind left something to be desired; but his manner was admirable and his voice clear, persuasive, melodious, an instrument of incomparable power and delicacy. Did Mark envy his brother? Did he grudge him a success already achieved? Did he grudge him—a subtler point—the greater success which undoubtedly he would achieve? To these questions he answered sincerely—"No."

Leaving Archibald, his thoughts flew straight and swift to Betty. She had come to King's Charteris to

hear him preach? Why? His heart flamed; for Archie had preached his first sermon in the village church. Had Betty travelled from town to hear Samphire senior? No.

When he returned to Pitt Hall, he had made a sort of compromise with his pride, his conscience, and his God. Time was when he abhorred compromise, but David Ross had said that a life without compromise must prove entirely selfish or so selfless in its aims as to be abnormal. Mark admitted the possibility of breakdown. And if silence were imposed, he must shoulder the burden. Speech, on the other hand, if it were truly his, included speech with Betty. He felt assured that she expected him to speak, that she had travelled to King's Charteris to hear him speak. He could not have said why this conviction thrilled every nerve in his body; it simply was so.

During the first part of the service, Mark found time to study the faces of the congregation. Betty, sitting beside Mrs. Corrance, looked pale and anxious. Mark remembered that she had not entered the church since the Admiral's funeral. Having keen sight, he detected traces of tears, which moved him profoundly. Behind her, with his broad back against one of the pillars, sat the Squire, rigidly upright. He had come

prepared to hear his boy—"the best boy in the world, sir"—preach a fine sermon. During the rector's long and somewhat dry discourses, the Squire always assumed an attitude of profound attention, his fine head inclined upon his massive chest, his eyes and lips meditatively closed. If suspicious sounds had not escaped through his nose, none would have dared to accuse him of napping. But everybody, from the rector to the latest breeched urchin, knew that the dear man slept like a humming-top from introduction to peroration. He would not sleep to-day. Expectation, tempered by anxiety, informed his expression, the expression assumed by him at Lord's, when his sons were walking to the wicket. Literally interpreted, it said: "A Samphire may fail, but it is not likely to happen." Mark glanced from his father to Mrs. Samphire. Her prominent eyes, set too far apart, like a sheep's, were slightly congested; her puffy cheeks were flushed. It struck Mark that she would accept failure on his part with Christian resignation. She resented the fact that Mark was the favourite son of the Squire, who may have seen the quality in his youngest born which distinguished the mother, and which Mark alone inherited. Mrs. Samphire was inordinately jealous of the first wife.

Mark's thoughts wandered with his eyes. Just below the pulpit he saw Wadge, the head keeper, a thin, hard-bitten, sharp-featured man, whose brown face was framed

in bushy red whiskers. Many a day's sport had Mark enjoyed with Wadge. He recalled a frosty morning when Jim Corrance, indiscreetly thrusting his hand into a burrow, had been nailed by a ferret. Behind Wadge was Bulpett, the butcher, a burly man, one of the churchwardens, and reputed to be worth a snug ten thousand pounds. What a lot of rats there used to be in his old slaughter-house before it was pulled down! Once Bulpett had caught Archie and Mark peeping through a chink in the slaughter-house at a calf he was about to kill. What silly idiots they felt when Bulpett politely invited them to come inside. And then Bulpett had laughed and said that he would send a nice piece of veal to Pitt Hall.

The rector gave out the psalms of the day. Archie's splendid voice filled the church. And who was this singing so shrilly and so abominably flat? Why dear old Ellen, to be sure—his first nurse—who must have walked all the way from Cranberry-Orcas. Ellen lived in a cottage near Cranberry brook, wherein Archie and he used to catch trout by the willow at the foot of her cabbage patch. She had been maid to the first Mrs. Samphire; and when Miss Selina Lamb came to Pitt Hall, Ellen married a porter, who had waited for her fifteen years. Mark knew the porter well. He was not an agreeable person, being rheumatic and asthmatic—and crusty in consequence—but at the time of the

marriage the Samphire boys agreed that Ellen was wise in preferring him to the Ewe, their nickname for the stepmother.

How his thoughts were wandering.

With an effort he led them from the nave into the chancel. In this church a famous poet and scholar had ministered for more than a quarter of a century. The ancients from the workhouse, who sat in the front seats of the aisle, wearing white smock frocks, had been ruddy-faced youths when the poet first came to King's Charteris. And in the village the influence of this saint remained a vital force, although he had been dead nearly twenty years. This thought moved Mark to pray that he might be given the gift of tongues, which is not the faculty of speaking many languages, but the infinitely greater power of making our fellow-creatures feel what we feel —of touching them to issues finer than those which ordinarily engross them, of so setting forth what is strong and tender and true that other things, no matter what they may be, shrink and shrivel into the trivial and insignificant.

The psalms came to an end. Standing at the great brass lectern, Mark read the lessons without stutter or pause in a voice slightly harsh, yet susceptible of modulation. Later, in the same harsh, penetrating tone he gave out his text. The scrapings of feet, the rustle of skirts, the occasional cough were silenced. Mark

began his sermon by asking his hearers to consider man's relation to others: a theme informed by him with phrases and illustrations drawn from personal observation of village life. Betty Kirtling felt as if she were peering into a magic mirror, wherein she saw herself illumined by a strange light, and this shining image was no phantom of the imagination, but her true substantial self, the woman as God intended her to be, with finite aims and appetites subordinate and subservient to the majestic design and purpose of the Infinite.

To her right were the village boys, a mob of sluggish-minded urchins, the raw material out of which is fashioned the Slowshire yokel. But each boy—so Betty noted—was gazing at Mark with intelligence and affection. He held them in thrall. The hard lines about Mrs. Samphire's eyes and mouth softened. The Squire was staring into the face of the preacher—seeing, hearing, feeling the mother of his son.

And then, when the great thing for which Mark had laboured as patiently as Demosthenes, seemed within his grasp, when he had proved to the meanest understanding that he had something to say which the world would hear gladly, his infirmity seized him. In the middle of a phrase he began to stutter. His face grew convulsed, his thin hand went to his throat, as if seeking to tear from it the abominable lump. But no

articulate word followed. Only a stutter falling with sibilant hiss upon the dismayed congregation.

At that moment a nervous, hysterical girl tittered. The woman seated next to her glared indiscreet rebuke. The wretched creature burst into discordant laughter. Betty heard the girl's laughter and saw Mark's twisted face. His eyes met hers in a glance which she could not interpret, as the girl who had laughed was led weeping from the church. The great oak door clanged behind her, and in the silence which followed Mark attempted to continue his sermon, but the last desperate effort to conquer a physical disability cannot be described. Betty covered her face. Old Ellen burst into piteous sobs. Mark turned towards the altar, the congregation rising. Then, with a firm step, he descended the steps of the pulpit.

The brothers came out of the vestry together, passed in silence through the churchyard, where Easter flowers were shining in the shadows cast by the lindens, crossed the village street, and strolled up the lane which led to Westchester Downs. In the street a small crowd had collected, including Wadge and Bulpett. Further down, by the lychgate, stood the Samphire landau. Mark saw a burly figure, and a face, redder even than usual. When the Squire perceived that his sons were crossing the street he got into the carriage.

"It's hard on him," said Mark. "The dear old man was so certain I should score."

The crowd made way; all the men touched their hats; upon every face was inscribed sympathy and affection. Bulpett advanced, holding out his huge hand. "Gawd bless ee, sir, we be tarr'ble sorry we be; but try again, Master Mark, try again!"

"Thank you, Bulpett," said Mark, without stammering. He glanced at the circle of kindly faces. "By Jove! it's good to have such friends."

The brothers walked on till they reached a bank flaming with primroses, and sloping to the old chalk-pit, where as boys they used to find fossils.

"You *will* try again?" said Archie nervously.

"Again and again," Mark answered. "All the same, I have the feeling that I shall never be a preacher."

The words burst vehemently from his lips. He was very pale, but calm. Archibald seemed quite overcome. Mark then said slowly: "I am not fit to preach."

"What?"

"I—I felt this morning a desire for material success which appalled me. I had touched you—all of you—to something fine, but—I cannot talk about it, even to you."

He paused with his eyes upon a distant cloud.

"That wretched girl!" groaned Archibald.

Mark's quietness seemed to exasperate the elder brother.

"I can't follow you," he said irritably. "Why shouldn't one want the good things of this world: power, position, honour?"

"Don't I want 'em? Great heavens! don't I hunger for 'em? But if they are not to be mine, what then?"

"You kiss the rod? In your place I should be furious, beside myself with resentment."

"Good old Archie," said Mark, taking his brother's hand and pressing it.

He stood up, reminding Archie that Mrs. Corrance had asked them to lunch with her.

"Betty cried like a baby," said Archie irrelevantly.

Mrs. Corrance received them in the small hall of her house, welcoming Mark with a mute sympathy more eloquent than words. Mark broke the silence as Betty came forward.

"I made a sad mess of it," he said, smiling genially.

But as he was washing his hands in Jim's room upstairs, his face hardened. He went to the window which overlooked Mrs. Corrance's rose-garden. At the end of a *pergola*, glorious in June with the blossoms of an immense Crimson Rambler, he could see a small arbour wherein Mrs. Corrance was in the habit of sitting whenever the day proved fine. This arbour was the prettiest

thing in the garden, and the one which brought most vividly to mind his childhood. Here, many and many a time, Mrs. Corrance had read to and played with Jim and the Samphire boys. He could just remember how dreary and neglected this garden had been when the arbour was built. Out of a chaos of weeds and stones and broken crockery (for the outgoing tenant had used this backyard as a dumping-ground for rubbish) Mrs. Corrance had created a lovely little world, a tiny domain peculiarly her own, fragrant with memories sweet as the thyme and lavender of its herbaceous borders. As a boy, Mark often wondered why time and care were lavished upon a piece of ground so insignificant. Now he knew. Mrs. Corrance had had the joy of fashioning beauty out of ugliness.

At luncheon he told some anecdotes of life in Stepney. Archibald's gloomy face and Betty's tell-tale eyelids kept his tongue wagging, but his thoughts were in the pulpit of King's Charteris Church or in Mrs. Corrance's rose-garden. The one seemed to have affinity with the other. Would his life remain a wilderness of weeds and broken crockery?

After luncheon he found himself alone with Betty in the arbour. He had dreaded this moment; so had she; and yet each was sensible of a harmony no more to be interpreted than the murmur of the wind in tall grasses.

"What are your plans?" she asked.

Indirectly he answered by speaking of life at the Camford Mission. She listened, computing the distance between Randolph House and Bethnal Green.

"You talk as if work—such work, too,—were all that is left."

He was silent. Her face, delicately flushed, brimming over with a tender and imaginative pity, implored him to speak.

"Work lies between me and what is left," he answered slowly, watching the pulse beat in the blue veins of her white neck.

"You may be famous yet," she whispered. "This morning when you began I—I almost forgot that it was you. And when I looked round, everybody, even the village boys, were spellbound."

"But when I f-f-failed," said Mark hurriedly, "you, you felt what I f-f-felt, that, that——" He put his hand to his throat, unable to finish the phrase because of the detestable lump rising and swelling in his throat.

"You thought *that* because I cried."

He nodded, seeing again her despairing gesture.

"I am sorry I was such a poor friend," she said quickly. "I ought not to have cried. I behaved like a weak fool. You will succeed yet, Mark. I know it; I know it."

The lump in his throat seemed to dissolve.

"But," she continued, "if—if it should be otherwise, do you think that I would care? Do you measure my friendship for you by the world's foot-rule?"

Mark seized her hands.

"God bless you!" he said passionately. "God bless you, dear, dear Betty!" Then abruptly, with a strange smile, he added, "Good-bye!"

He had gone before she could recover her wits or her voice. She stood alone, a piteous figure, truly feminine inasmuch as she was not able to pursue the man.

"Oh, oh!" she cried, covering her face as she had done in the church. "I cannot bear the misery behind his smiles."

CHAPTER X.

AFTER THREE YEARS.

"I AM growing older and older," said Betty Kirtling.

Lady Randolph, looking up from a paper, peered through her glasses at charms which Time had embellished rather than diminished. Betty had passed her twenty-second birthday; she had begun her fifth season; but by virtue of high health and spirits she still retained the bloom and freshness of the *débutante*. She stood at the middle window of the morning-room of Randolph House, the big brown house at the corner of Belgrave Square, from whose hospitable doors Archibald and Mark Samphire had driven to Lord's Cricket Ground when they were Harrow boys. Outside, a May sun was shining after a shower; and in the puddles on the balcony some sparrows were taking their bath. Betty was reflecting that London sparrows must be very uncomfortable in a dry summer.

"Are you wiser?" Lady Randolph asked.

"I know that sparrows wash themselves, and that

skylarks don't," Betty replied. "I suppose the London sparrows had to bathe, and that they learned to love it. How jolly they look, splashing about. That must be a cock bird. Do you see? He takes a whole puddle to himself."

Lady Randolph laid down the *Morning Post*.

"Archibald Samphire has been made a minor canon of Westchester," she said abruptly.

Betty slightly turned her head. Lady Randolph perceived a faint pink blush tingeing the whiteness of her neck.

"And Jim Corrance is coming here to luncheon—to-day."

Betty's exclamation at this must be explained. Jim had spent three years in South Africa, buying and selling gold-mines. He was now a junior partner in the great firm which he had entered five years before as a clerk.

"I shall ask Archibald Samphire and Jim to come to us at Birr Wood for the Whitsuntide recess. Do you think Mark would join them!"

"Perhaps; if you were careful to make no mention of me."

"Betty?"

"He shuns me as if I were a leper. I've not seen him for eighteen months. Yes—ask him. Make him come! I should like to meet those three once again."

She ran from the room, laughing. Lady Randolph frowned. "Does she care for Jim?" she was reflecting, "or is it still Mark? Or—is it Archibald? She has always been loyal to her boy lovers." Her wise old eyes began to twinkle. Many men, some of them irreproachable from the marriage point of view, had fallen in love with the Kirtling girl with the De Courcy eyes, but in vain. "And yet she is not cold," mused her friend; "a passionate nature if ever there was one. How will it end?" She often told herself that this ever-increasing interest in Betty made life worth the living. She recognised in her qualities which invited speculation. Betty had a sense of religion lacking, or let us say elementary, in Lord Randolph's wife; on the other hand, the girl's sense of humour was less keen than her own. Pynsent—she liked Pynsent—always spoke of Betty's unexpectedness. So far, what she had done and said had been more or less conventional. That indicated Irish blood—the wish to please those with whom she lived.

Her reflections were interrupted by Jim Corrance. He explained that he had landed at Southampton within the week.

"I saw this house last night," he concluded, "and it brought back the days when you were so kind to us. So I asked if you were at home. And I was delighted to get your wire this morning. Is Betty here?"

"No." His face amused his old friend, but she added quickly: "She is upstairs, prinking for you. Have you seen Mark Samphire?"

"I saw him yesterday, and I shall see him again this afternoon," said Jim gravely. "He has a very ugly cough. Mark is overworked, you know."

"I don't know," said Lady Randolph drily. "Tell me about him."

Jim began to describe the difficulties against which Mark was contending. Lady Randolph's eyes lost their sparkle.

"Do you believe all you say?" she asked when Jim paused. "You indict Mark's commonsense and worldly wisdom, but are you as sure as you seem to be that he is tilting at windmills?"

Corrance was silent.

"I have used your arguments a thousand times," continued Lady Randolph, "and always, but *always*, I have doubted their real value. And I am supposed to be a scoffer, a freethinker, a woman of the world. It is amazing that I can sympathise at all with Mark, yet I do, and so do you, my friend. You are no more sure than I that he is not right in sacrificing the things which we rate so highly. When I last saw him his face was haggard and white, but he looked happier than you."

Jim stared at the pattern in the carpet, till an awkward pause was broken by the entrance of Betty, a

adiant vision from which the young man laughingly haded his eyes. Her welcome was so warm, that Lady Randolph made certain the girl's heart was untouched so far as Jim Corrance was concerned. Soon after the three joined Lord Randolph in the dining-room, where Jim was persuaded to talk of what he had done and what he hoped to do. The sun had been shining on him steadily during three years; and its glow illumined the present and the future.

"You look pink with prosperity," said Betty; then she added: "Have you heard of Archie's preferment? he has been made a minor canon of Westchester."

"Archibald Samphire is the handsomest young man in the Church of England," observed Lord Randolph.

"Mark always said that Archie had a leg for a gaiter," Corrance remarked.

"A well-turned leg," said Lady Randolph, "carries a man into high places; and Archie is hard-working, discreet, and ambitious. He will climb, mark me."

Obviously Jim was delighted to hear of his friend's success; but Betty's expression defied interpretation.

"It's queer," said Corrance, "but old Archie has always got what he wanted. Some fellows at Harrow called it luck. I don't believe in luck."

"I do," cried Betty. "So did Napoleon. Archie is lucky. Do you know that he has come into an aunt's fortune—about eight hundred a year—which ought to

have gone to the eldest son—George? Archie won the old lady's heart, when he was a boy, by writing her a wonderful letter; George pinched her pug's tail, or threw stones at her cat, or something. Archie behaved nicely, and his letter, I believe, was a model."

"Well—I'm hanged!" exclaimed Jim. "Was it Aunt Deborah Samphire? It was—eh? Well, I remember that letter quite well. Mark dictated it, for a lark. And I contributed a word or two. She sent Archie a fiver when he got into the Sixth, and he came to us. Mark said that Aunt Deb should have a letter which would warm the cockles of her heart. It was a masterpiece."

"Um!" said Lord Randolph. "This young fellow is certainly a favourite of the gods. Luck? Good Gad—who can doubt it? There was that scoundrel Crewkerne——"

He plunged into a story which began behind the counter of a haberdasher's and ended in the House of Lords.

"Crewkerne had the devil's own luck," Lord Randolph concluded; "and luck seems to sit beside young Samphire and you, my boy, but the other lad, Mark, the fellow with the eyes, is one of the unlucky ones. That first sermon of his now——"

"Which was also his last," said Betty.

"Eh—what?" Lord Randolph stared. "You don't mean that. He has tried again—surely?"

"Again—and again," said Betty, "but his stammer always defeats him."

"And he had the real stuff in him," said Lord Randolph. "What a pity it was not allowed to come out!"

"The real stuff always comes out," said Lady Randolph, rising.

When Jim took his leave a few minutes later, he was under promise to spend Whitsuntide at Birr Wood. Lady Randolph commissioned him to persuade Mark to be of the party. Archibald—she felt assured—would join them. But it must be made plain that a refusal from Mark would be considered an offence.

Outside, Jim lit an excellent cigar which he smoked as a cab whirled him eastward. Years afterwards he remembered that drive: the swift transition from Belgrave Square to the Mile End Road. He had seen Mark the day before, but only for a few minutes, because some poor creature had come running for his friend. But those few minutes stood out sable against the white background of their previous intercourse. Never could he forget Mark's delight at seeing him: the light in his blue eyes, the grasp of his thin hand, the thrill of his voice. And yet, to offset this, was the grim

fact that his friend's health and strength were failing. And this failure, measured by his (Corrance's) success, seemed tragic. Yet was it? The question festered. And that long drive, the gradual descent of the hill of Life, lent it new and poignant significance. If Mark had forsworn all Randolph House included—and it held Betty Kirtling—what had he gained?

The well-bred grey between the shafts of the hansom sped on past the houses of the rich and mighty, and plunged into the roaring world of work. Here, on both sides of the street, in flaming gold letters for the most part, were the names of the successful strivers, the prosperous tradesmen, merchants, and bankers. Farther on, in Fleet Street, might be seen other names—those of the heralds and recorders of human effort—the famous newspapers. Jim's eyes sparkled, and his heart beat faster. For the moment he forgot the dun streets behind these resplendent thoroughfares—the interminable miles and miles of houses which shelter the millions who toil and moil out of sight and out of mind!

Passing the Mansion House, the grey knocked down a ragamuffin. Corrance was out of his cab in a jiffy, but the urchin scrambled up, apparently unhurt. Jim gave him half a crown and a scolding, much to the amusement of the burly policeman, who was of opinion that the young rascal might have done it on purpose. Jim was horrified. "Bless yer, sir, they'd do more than

that to get a few coppers." These words stuck in his thoughts.

When he reached the Mission House he was received by one of the younger members—a deacon full of enthusiasm which flared, indeed, from every word he spoke. Corrance was struck by the lad's face—his bright complexion, clear eyes, and general air of sanity. Some of the men at the Mission were ill-equipped for the pleasures of life, and therefore, perhaps, more justified in accepting its pains in the hope of compensation hereafter. They, to be sure, would have repudiated indignantly the barter and sale of bodies and souls. None the less, the self-sacrifice of one pre-eminently qualified to win this world's prizes became the more remarkable.

"Samphire will be here in five minutes," said the young fellow. "Can I offer you anything—a whisky and soda, a cigarette?"

"If you will join me."

"I shall be glad of the excuse," replied the other frankly. "It is horribly thirsty weather, isn't it? And a thirst is catching. I've been working amongst the navvies this morning. Glorious chaps—some of them! I attend to the games, you know, cricket and football."

He plunged into a description of the men with whom he had dealings; and from them, by a natural

transition, to David Ross, who had just been made Bishop of Poplar. For David Ross great things were predicted.

"It's like this," he concluded: "Our people are waking up. Time they did, too. And the men who will fill the big billets will be those who have seen active service. I don't sneer at the scholars, but a bishop nowadays must be more concerned with the present than the past. Ross has given his attention to conditions of life amongst the very poor, and I believe he knows more about 'em than most men of twice his age and experience. Samphire's friends may think *he's* wasting his time—from a worldly point of view, I mean—down here in the slums, but he isn't."

Mark's entrance cut short this conversation, and the speaker withdrew at once.

"Nice boy," said Mark. "The sort we want most, and so seldom get. Half our fellows are discouraged, and show it; but I'm not going to talk shop to you, old chap."

"I saw Betty Kirtling to-day," said Jim abruptly. "It's amazing that she is still Betty Kirtling."

Mark said nothing. Jim, after a keen glance at his pale face, began to speak of the Whitsuntide party, which at first Mark refused to join. Jim grew warm in persuasion, accusing Mark of churlishness, making the

matter one personal to himself. Finally, Mark consented to spend four days at Birr Wood.

"We shall hear Archie preach in Westchester Cathedral," Mark said. "It will be a great opportunity."

"I wish it were you," Jim replied quickly.

"I shall never p-p-preach," stammered Mark.

A few minutes later the friends were on their way to one of those squalid courts which lie between the Mile End Road and the river. To Jim the dull uniformity of the houses indicated a life inexorably drab in colour and coarse as fustian in texture. But Mark had the microscopist's power of revealing the beauty that lies imprisoned in a speck of dust. Seen by the polarised light of his imagination these dreary dwellings showed all the colours of the spectrum. Here lived a family of weavers; there, behind those grimy windows, were fashioned the wonderful hats, the bank-holiday hats of Whitechapel. Of every trade pursued in this gigantic hive he had the details at his tongue's tip; and through the woof of his description ran golden threads. More than once Corrance touched upon the obstacles—the evershifting population, the indifference which lies between class and class, the drunkenness, the premature marriages of penniless boys and girls.

"These are mountains, yes."

"You have set your face to the stars, and you do not look back, eh?" Corrance said quickly. He was

sorry he had put the question, for he felt th
would not try to evade it.

"Look back?" cried Mark. "Aye, a t
times; perhaps, as one climbs higher the pleasan
will grow dim. I'm not high enough for that," h
hastily.

"You have climbed far above me," said Ji
mently; "and far as you have climbed I hav
twice as far, down hill." Then, reading dis
Mark's face, he added with a laugh: "Don't s
have said too much already. You have the
power of compelling confession. Tell me more
these weavers!"

Mark obeyed, conscious that troubled waters
between himself and his old friend.

CHAPTER XI.

IN LOVE'S PLEASAUNCE.

BIRR WOOD lies within three miles of Westchester upon the banks of the Itchen. The house itself—the home of the Randolphs for four centuries—was rebuilt by Inigo Jones, and has been mentioned by Lord Orford as being one of that great architect's best works. Like many of Jones's palaces, Birr Wood is a show place. The magnificent avenue, the Italian gardens, the terraces, the disposition of the trees in the park are mere accessories to the vast white pile which dominates the whole, a glittering monument to rank and wealth and power.

Pynsent, who had painted four members of the Randolph family, admired the house enormously, but he maintained that it must remain greater than any man who might inhabit it. The splendid columns and pilasters, so expressive of what is enduring in Greek art, were designed obviously to last for ever, albeit the Randolphs themselves, once so numerous, so vigorous, and so pre-eminent, were dwindling to extinction. Pyn-

sent, possibly because he was an American, failed to apprehend the pathos of this. Mark Samphire said to him: "It is so horribly sad to think that soon there will be no Randolphs at Birr Wood."

"Um," replied the painter, "how much sadder it would be if there were no Birr Wood for the Randolphs, or those that come after them. Suppose it burned down, eh?"

Mark was silent.

"I have heard you say," continued Pynsent, "that the work, the best work of men's hands, is greater than the men themselves. And you are right. To me Birr Wood is not the ancient home of the Randolphs, nor the masterpiece of Inigo Jones, but a materialisation, adapted to modern needs, of the spirit of Greek architecture. For my part, kind as our friends have been, much as I like them as individuals, I feel that their house is, in a strained sense perhaps, profaned by the presence of an hereditary disease. The Randolphs Van Dyck painted were worthy to live at Birr Wood."

This talk took place upon the terrace facing the Italian gardens upon the Friday preceding Whit-Sunday. The Samphires, Pynsent, Jim Corrance and his mother, Betty Kirtling, young Kirtling (now Lord Kirtling), and three fashionable maidens made up a party which had assembled on that day, and would disperse upon the following Tuesday.

Jim had not met Archibald Samphire for some three years. Archie, Jim said to himself, might be only a minor canon, but already he had the air of a great gun. He spoke little, and it was understood that he was thinking of his sermon in Westchester Cathedral. After dinner, in the red saloon, he sang three songs: one a lyric, a *Frühlingslied*, sweetly pastoral and simple; the second a love song by an eminent French composer; the last that hackneyed adaptation of Bach's lovely prelude, Gounod's "Ave Maria." When he moved from the piano the girls surrounded him, prattling thanks and entreaties for more. But Betty, so Corrance noted, sat still, with a faint flush upon her cheeks and a suffused light in her eyes.

"He sings extraordinarily well," said Jim.

"Yes," Betty sighed.

Just then Mark came up, rubbing his hands. His delight in his brother's voice struck Jim as being pathetic.

"It's the quality that does it," Mark explained. "That second song of his—rubbish, eh? But it thrilled—didn't it, Betty? And the tragic note, the note of interrogation: the forlorn 'why', you heard that?"

"Yes, yes," said Betty hastily.

"A vocal trick," Jim observed, rather abruptly. Then he moved away, surrendering his seat to Mark, who dropped into it.

"Well?" said Mark, following Corrance's figure with his eyes. "What do you think of old Jim?"

"I am thinking of the new Jim," Betty answered. "And I suppose I can measure the change in myself by the change in him. Archie has changed too. Only you, Mark, remain the same."

She flashed a blinding glance upon him. Somehow Mark realised that the glance was an indictment.

"I have changed," he replied quickly.

"No, no. You are the same Mark, with the same ideas, the same ideals of years ago."

"Ideals?" The expression on her face bewildered him. Not a score of feet away the others were buzzing about Archie, but Betty and he seemed to be alone. "You used to share my ideals, Betty."

"You mean you shared them with me, but when you went away you took them with you. Now they are like you—out of sight."

"I am here now," he replied.

"Because your brother is here. You did not come to see me."

"Perhaps I did," he murmured, his thin face aflame with colour. Betty's cheeks were pale, but her bosom heaved.

"If that be really true, I forgive," she whispered. "Only, prove it!"

She leaned towards him.

"Betty," he said hoarsely, "you know why I have stayed away from you." He looked so distressed that she feared the eyes of the others.

"You shall tell me that and more, to-morrow," she murmured, rising. "My cousin is crossing to us."

Young Kirtling wanted her to sing, but she refused.

"You always say 'No,'" he growled.

Pynsent joined them, followed by Archibald and the others. Lady Randolph seated herself beside Mark.

"We have not had a chat for an age," she began, and then went on abruptly: "How do you like my guests?"

Mark's eyes rested for an instant upon young Kirtling's handsome but rather saturnine features. Lady Randolph laughed and tapped Mark's hand with her fan.

"I didn't ask him. He asked himself. He is still mad about our Betty, but she flouts him. The Admiral wished it, as you know."

"And you," said Mark.

"I want the girl to be happy. And I shall be satisfied if she finds her peer outside the House of Lords. She has plenty of money and can marry whom she pleases."

For the second time that evening Mark's cheeks flamed.

"She beguiles all hearts," continued Lady Randolph, looking at Mark out of the corner of a shrewd grey

eye; "Jim Corrance makes no secret of his feelings; and your handsome brother sang for her and at her to-night. Somehow I can't conceive of her as the wife of, let us say, a bishop."

"There are bishops and bishops," said Mark.

"Just so. I am told that a certain person who has been labouring in a field which—which does not smell as one that the Lord hath blessed—may, if he continues to display his remarkable powers of organisation, wear lawn some day."

Then she spoke discreetly of other things, seeing that Mark's lips were quivering and his eyes shining; while the young man listened, hearing her pungent, pleasant phrases, but seeing only Betty—Betty—Betty!

Meantime that young lady had left the saloon accompanied by Pynsent, Kirtling, and Jim Corrance. Mark could hear their voices in the room beyond, and Betty's voice, Betty's laugh, came clearly to his ears above the chorus, even as the silvery notes of a flute float upward from the clashing cymbals and roaring bassoons. Mark rose quickly and slipped away into the moonshine of the terrace.

For three years he had told himself daily that the woman he loved could never be his. Now—he drew a deep breath—she had come once more within his grasp. More, the world, in the person of his shrewd

old friend, recognised that he, the failure, had not really failed, that he might have to give, even from the world's point of view, something worth the taking. And here, where material things possessed such significance, he could measure what he had accomplished with a detachment unachievable in Stepney. A thousand details presented themselves: a summons to the house of a great minister, an interview with a prince, who professed interest in the better housing of the poor, letters from celebrities asking for information, and his ever-increasing friendship with David Ross, now famous. The power of the orator had been denied him, and perhaps on that account he had been the keener to practise what otherwise he might have been content to preach.

He walked slowly down the terrace and into the garden which lay below, a conventional garden cut and trimmed to the patterns set by Le Nôtre at Versailles and known to the passing tourist as Love's Pleasaunce, because it was embellished by marble statues of Venus and attendant Amorini. In the centre sparkled a sheet of water wherein and whereon the fountains played on high days and holidays. Mark knew that the key to the middle fountain was concealed in an Italian cypress. Often as a boy he had begged permission to turn this key, and always, he remembered, there had been a certain disappointment because the English climate so

seldom lends itself to such a scene, for instance, as Aphrodite rising from the waters. Now he reflected that he had never seen the fountains play by moonlight. The whim seized him to turn the key. A second later he was gazing spellbound at the goddess in the centre of the pool. At the touch of the shimmering waters the white image thrilled into life. Clothed with silvery tissues, which revealed rather than concealed the adorable grace of her limbs, Aphrodite smiled. Beneath the dimpled surface of the pool, her feet twinkled into a dance, a measure of the moon, slow, rhythmic, and set to the music of the fountain. Beyond, in the shadow of the cypresses, Mark caught a glimpse of two nymphs: one playing the double flute dear to Thebans, the other, seated, sweeping the strings of the Homeric phorminx. From these, surely, floated the liquid notes, the trills and cadences, which had stirred to movement the feet of the goddess. Mark touched the key again. The music died in a sigh. Aphrodite hid herself in the cold marble. The pool, so sweetly troubled, became still. Mark smiled and released once more the goddess. But the illusion had lost its spell. Mark touched the key for the last time, reflecting that Aphrodite rises once only for mortal men. And the pleasure, now, had a forlorn aspect. A cloud obscured the moon, so that the silver of the scene became as lead and the shadows grew chill and amorphous. Mark

walked slowly away towards the lights of the house which held Betty.

On the terrace he paused, startled by a deep voice. Archibald was calling him by name.

"You here?" said Mark.

Archie was seated on a stone bench, which stood in the shadows.

"Yes. Sit down!"

"You are in trouble," said Mark quickly. "Dear old fellow, what's wrong?"

"My sermon."

Mark sat down, saying: "Tell me about it."

Archie began to speak with a dogged intonation which recalled Harrow days. As he indicated the scope of the sermon already written out, Mark drummed with his foot upon the terrace.

"I know it," groaned the elder brother. "It will send the Dean to sleep, and Lord Randolph will twiddle his thumbs, and my lady will smile ironically—and Betty——"

"Yes."

"Betty will pity me."

A silence followed. Mark was reflecting that Betty's pity without Betty's love would be hard to endure.

"You care for her?" he muttered.

"Oh, yes," said Archibald impatiently, "but she says 'No' to me and everybody else. How I have loved

that witch," his voice grew sentimental, "and how I should like to show her that I can preach. And so I can for ordinary occasions, but when it comes to a big thing—somehow I don't score. I'd like to score this time, eh? And if—if you could help me, why—why, it might make all the difference."

"About Betty?" Mark's voice was thin and strained, but Archie was too engrossed with his own thoughts to notice that.

"Betty? I'm not thinking about Betty. I mean that next Sunday may be the making or marring of my career."

"Oh!"

"I put my profession first, as you do, Mark. I can say to you what I would admit to no other, that success in it is vital to me. I've worked hard, and of course I've a pull over most fellows, for which I'm sincerely grateful; but I've not your brains."

"It happens," said Mark after a slight pause, "that I have written a sermon about Westchester Cathedral. You might find something in it; not much I dare say; but a hint or two. As, as I shall never preach it, why, why shouldn't you have it?"

"I'd like to see it, Mark. Some of my best sermons have been suggested—only suggested, mind you—by reading others. Robertson is a gold-mine, and Newman. Where is your sermon?"

"Locked up in my desk at the Mission House."

"Oh!"

"I can nip up and get it," said Mark, after a pause.

"I couldn't allow that, Mark. You're on a holiday and——"

"There's stuff in that sermon," Mark interrupted.

"I'd like you to see it. Holiday be hanged! I'll fetch it to-morrow."

CHAPTER XII.

BETTY IN STEPNEY.

BETTY KIRTLING came down to breakfast the next morning in her prettiest frock, and with her prettiest smile upon a glowing face. Indeed, Lord Randolph, meeting her in the hall, held up his thin, white hand, and confessed himself dazzled. Betty laughed when he quoted a line of Dryden, sensible that only a poet could do justice to her looks if they reflected faithfully her feelings. Perhaps the philosopher, with his faintly ironical smile, knew better than the poet that "the porcelain clay of human kind" is easily broken, and (being a collector) he may have remembered (which accounts for the shadows in his eyes) that rare pieces seldom escape chipping. He followed the girl into the dining-room, and saw that she seated herself next the chair which had been taken by Mark the morning before. Mark, however, was not in the room, his absence being accounted for by young Kirtling, who had met him driving to the station.

"To the station?" echoed Betty.

Archibald Samphire added that he was charged by

his brother to make the proper excuses. Mark had gone to town on an important matter, and would return that evening before dinner. Lady Randolph frowned.

"Pon my soul," she exclaimed, "our young man takes himself too seriously."

"He's the best and kindest fellow in the world," said Archie. Then he hesitated. He could not explain the nature of Mark's errand without exciting curiosity about himself and his sermon.

"What were you going to say?" whispered Betty.

"Mark has gone to town to do me a service," said Archie.

She pouted: "I believe Mark would do anything for you."

With his eyes on his plate, Archie slowly answered, "Yes." Then seeing that Betty was trifling with her bacon, he added in a different tone: "I advise you to try this omelette. Shall I get some for you?"

Betty said "No" somewhat tartly, wondering why Mark had left Birr Wood. "He might have told me last night at dinner," she thought.

After breakfast she escaped from young Kirtling and Jim Corrance, and betook herself to a secluded spot in the gardens, where she sat staring at a pretty volume of verse—held upside down. It was intolerable that she should be sitting here and Mark sixty miles away. Then she smiled, remembering that only yesterday the distance

between them had seemed immeasurable. And a word, a glance, had bridged it! What a miracle of Cupid's engineering! Her cheeks were hot as she wondered whether she had given herself away too cheaply. If propriety faltered "Yes," generosity thundered—"No." She was sure she understood Mark better than any creature living, and certainly she understood herself. Always she had wanted him, but always—always! And he had wanted her, and would want her for ever and ever. It will be our object to show Betty Kirtling as a young woman of many facets illumined by lights and cross-lights; but for the moment she is presented beneath the blaze of Love, which, like the sun, eclipses other luminaries. Betty was an adept at, if not the mistress of, many accomplishments. She had been told that she might excel as a musician, a painter, or a writer, if she chose to give any one of these arts undivided attention. She preferred to play with all rather than work with one, and wisely, for her admiration of what others had done was certainly a greater thing than what she might have done herself. And, perhaps, because she had scattered her own energies, she was the more keenly appreciative of sustained endeavour wherever she found it. Young Kirtling, for instance, aroused interest because he hunted his own hounds as well as any man in England; Jim Corrance whetted mere affection into something with a sharper edge to it, inasmuch as he had sought fortune

in South Africa and had found it; Archie was singing himself steadily and stolidly into such exalted places as the pulpit of Westchester Cathedral.

Sitting there in May time encompassed by Arcadian scents and sounds, Betty found herself speculating upon the mutual attraction of man and maid. Young ladies kill time with such meditations as pleasantly as men kill partridges. Betty, however, while sipping the sweet, made a wry face over the bitter. Mark's work in the slums stood between her and him, a mystery which she must accept, knowing that she could never understand it. The horrors amongst which Mark moved revolted her; the contrast between her life and his pierced imagination, and left it to bleed; pity, sympathy, the woman's desire to minister to infirmity, were drained, glutted, by the incredible demand upon them.

These meditations were disturbed by Lady Randolph. Betty, as soon as she saw her kind friend, remembered that Lady Randolph had shown her this delightful nook, and had said that she (Lady Randolph) was in the habit of sitting here.

"You—alone?" said Lady Randolph. "I have just passed Harry Kirtling. He asked me if I knew where he could find you. Shall I tell him?"

"Pray don't," said Betty, making room for her friend on the stone bench. "And besides," she added, letting

a dimple be seen, "you could not tell him where I was. I have spent the last hour in Stepney."

"I can't see you in Stepney, my dear."

"I thought you would say that," said Betty, nervously playing with the laces on her frock; then, reading the sympathy in the other's face, she burst out: "Oh—I'm a coward, a coward! I loathe Stepney."

Lady Randolph wondered whether it would be wise to speak. She cherished the conviction that when in doubt it is better to say nothing; and yet, in the end, despite a strong feeling that her advice would be wasted, she said quietly:

"I knew your mother."

"Am I like her?" interrupted Betty.

"I have often thought," continued the elder woman, ignoring Betty's question, "that if Louise de Courcy had had your upbringing her life would have been so different——"

"You mean she would not have married my father." Betty's voice hardened. "Well, if she felt as—as I feel, she would have married him anyway, if she loved him."

"She would not have loved him," said Lady Randolph with emphasis. "We women love the things which we are taught to believe are lovable. You, Betty, have been trained, trained, I say, to love things and people of good report. It was otherwise with your mother."

"And my father," added Betty. "I have always known that I was handicapped. Yes; I have been trained to see—it's a question of observation, isn't it?—to see and admire what is good in everything and everybody, but you don't know what a materialist I am. I delight in your flesh-pots. Why just now, when I was trying to walk with Mark through those horrible slums, I found myself thinking of what——? The delicious *macédoine* we had last night!"

Lady Randolph laughed.

"It's no laughing matter. I'm greedy; I spend too much time thinking of *chiffons*; and I spend too much money buying them; I adore great things, but I cannot give up small things. I want to run with the hare and course with the hounds. Lots of girls try to do both—and succeed in a feeble sort of way: a fast on Friday and feast on Saturday diet, eh?"

"In Stepney——" began Lady Randolph.

Betty seized her hands. "Why should I go to Stepney?" she whispered, blushing. "I'll be honest with you."

"I hope so, my dear."

"Mark is going to ask me to marry him. It may be to-day, or to-morrow, or the day after, but it's coming; and I shall fling myself into his arms."

"Betty!"

"I haven't a spark of pride left. His long silence

smothered it. Do you know that he wanted to be a famous soldier, because when we were babies I said I must marry a fighting man."

"If he isn't a fighting man I never saw one."

"Thank you. You always appreciated him. When he was spun for the army he thought he had lost me. And then came that awful scene in King's Charteris Church. He gave me up then, but I stuck to him. And now, now," her eyes filled with tears although her lips were smiling, "he shall know that success or failure counts nothing with me. I want him, him. And anything which stands between us I abhor."

Lady Randolph's attempt to reduce this speech to its elements found expression in a simple: "You will ask him to give up Stepney?"

"I shall ask him to seek work in some place where you do not smell fried fish. There is plenty to do west of Temple Bar."

"And the others? You have flirted with all of them, Betty; don't deny it."

"But I do deny it."

"You encouraged Harry Kirtling the season before last."

"As if he needed encouragement."

"He nearly persuaded you to marry him."

"Yes, he did," she confessed, blushing furiously.

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"I burn when I think of that Ascot week. Bah! what fools girls are. Mark never came near me, answered my letters with post-cards. I give you my word, post-cards. I sent sheaves and received straws. And Harry makes love nicely."

"You gave him lots of practice," Lady Randolph observed drily.

"He wanted me so badly that he offered to give up his hounds and settle down wherever I pleased."

"And Jim and Archibald."

"My oldest friends."

"Ah, well," sighed Lady Randolph, "you are a lucky girl, Betty. Four good fellows want you."

"Archie wouldn't tell me why Mark went to town," said Betty absently. "What a voice he has! When he sings I feel like a Madonna. And his face——! A man has no business to be so good-looking. I am shameless enough to confess to you, only to you, that his good looks appeal to me enormously. It annoys me. I find myself staring at him as if he were a sort of royalty. And when other girls do it, I think them idiots. Well, for that matter I have never disguised from myself, or you, that I am a bit of an idiot."

"You are very human."

"I am not all you think me," cried the girl. "And

yet you read me better than anyone else, but there are pages and pages turned down. I peep at them sometimes, and am quite scared. Mark shall tear them out and tear them up. Dear me! I am making myself ridiculous: chattering on and on about myself."

"One is never ridiculous when one is young," said Lady Randolph solemnly, "and I hope, my dear, you will let me read the turned-down pages before they are torn up. I used to say to myself that I should like to begin life again, to have one more chance. And, listening to you, I feel that I am beginning again. It is exciting. Only I hope that sometimes you will listen to me, and try to profit by my experience of a subject on which you, Betty, are so amazingly ignorant."

"That subject's name is Legion."

"That subject's name is Man. You have tried, I daresay, to measure Mark with a girl's rule of thumb, to weigh him in virgin's scales, but his dimensions remain an unknown quantity."

For answer, Betty kissed her.

"Tell me," she whispered, "all you know that I do not know."

"We should sit here for forty years! Our world says you ought to marry Harry, and our world is always more than half right. Harry has entertained you with a vast deal of talk about himself, and perhaps you think you know him. Ah! you nod your head with all

the cocksureness of ignorance. You spoke of his giving up his hounds—for your sake, because you might find Kirtling a far cry from Bond Street. Oh, the conceit of the modern girl! My dear, Harry knew well enough that if you became his wife, no such sacrifice would be demanded. The hounds would remain at Kirtling, and so would you. If you were beautiful as Helen of Troy, and fascinating as Cleopatra, you could not root out that passion for hunting his own hounds. It is a master passion, and always will be so long as he can sit in the saddle. And in your heart of hearts you respect and like Harry the more because he does that one thing really well.”

“I am sure you are right,” said Betty humbly.

“Well, my dear, what hunting the fox is to Harry, so is the hunting of vice, and ignorance, and dirt to Mark Samphire. The masculine ardour of the chase possesses both, and each will hunt the country he knows best.”

Betty’s silence provoked her friend to say more. “You are in for a fight, child.” She took Betty’s hand, which seemed cold, and pressed it gently. “On your own confession you are unfit to be the wife of the man you love, and who loves you; and so, pray don’t ask me for congratulations.”

“You did not marry for love,” cried Betty. Then she paused, ashamed. “Forgive me!”

"It is true." Lady Randolph turned a grim face to the girl, and her voice was harsh. "I did not marry for love. Shall we say that I lacked courage, or did I see clearer than you mountainous differences of temperament, taste, and opinion, which my love was not strong enough to scale? Was I a coward because I turned back? I do not say Yes or No. The man I loved had the brains, but not the body of a conqueror. Do you think that I was right or wrong because I refused to add burdens to a back already bowed?"

She spoke with such vehemence that Betty was frightened.

"I d-d-do not know," she stammered.

"I do not know," repeated the other fiercely. "When these mysteries between our lower and higher natures are revealed, I *shall* know, and not till then—not—till—then."

Her lips closed violently, as if speech were alarmed into silence.

CHAPTER XIII.

BAGSHOT ON THE RAMPAGE.

ALONE in his room at the Mission, Mark read over the sermon he had written upon Westchester Cathedral. Then he stared at the bare boards, the whitewashed walls, the narrow camp bedstead, the Windsor chairs: things eloquent of a renunciation which he had found sweet a week ago. Here he had been well content to live, here he had known that he might die. And now in these same familiar surroundings he felt another man; the tides of another life ran breast high to meet the quiet waters. Was it always so, he wondered? Did love, such love as he felt for Elizabeth Kirtling, such love as she felt for him, exact sacrifice? Yes. Mark never doubted, then or thereafter, that if he took Betty and left his work, it would be ill for both of them. This conviction was buttressed by a half-score of proofs, trivial indeed in themselves, yet in their sum confirmation strong. Beneath his hand lay a memorandum-book. Mark opened it. On the first page was a list of names, drunkards all of them, many women, a few

boys and girls. These poor creatures leaned upon him. Each week they brought to him such of their earnings as otherwise would be spent in drink. With each Mark had fought and prevailed. He alone held the master key to their hearts. People who live within a mile or two of the slums may sneer at a repentance or reformation founded upon an influence merely personal, which may be withdrawn at any minute. But those labouring among the very poor and ignorant are well aware that this personal influence, this amazing power and attraction which one soul may exercise over another, is the first lever by which ignorance, and poverty, and sin may be raised to the level whence the Creator is dimly seen and apprehended through the created. Mark knew, and every fellow-worker in the Mission knew, that personal influence may, and often does, soften the hard surface upon which it shines, so that other rays may penetrate, but he knew also that if personal influence be withdrawn before that softening process is complete, induration follows. Mark read over the names in the little book, and closed it with a sigh as a knock at his door was heard. The handsome young deacon entered the room.

"Hullo!" he cried, "I am glad you're here."

"What's up?" said Mark.

"Bagshot is on the rampage."

"The miserable sinner!"

"He got his wages last night, and came round as usual to give 'em to you, but he wouldn't give 'em to me. Then he went off."

"Didn't you go with him?"

"I wish I had thought of it," said the other ruefully. "He went straight from here to the 'Three Feathers,' and stayed there till closing time."

Mark looked at his watch. His train left Waterloo in an hour. He had time to see Bagshot, although such time would probably be wasted. Bagshot was a brand snatched from the burning some six weeks before: a big, burly, blackguard of a navvy, strong as Sandow, weak as Reuben, reasonable enough when sober, a mad-man drunk, with a frail wife and five small children at his mercy.

"I'll go alone," said Mark, as the young fellow reached for his hat.

He hurried off, followed at a discreet distance by the deacon. The Bagshots lived not far from the Mission, in Vere Terrace, a densely populated slum. Mark tapped at the door of Number 5, opened by a tattered girl of twelve, whose fingers and face were smeared with paste.

"Where's your father, 'Liza?" said Mark.

"Dunno," replied 'Liza. "'E's drunk, wherever 'e is. Would yer like to see mother, Mr. Samphire?"

Mark followed the child into the living-room of the family. Coming straight from Birr Wood, contrast smote him with a violence he had never before experienced. The Bagshot family sat round a rickety table making matchboxes. Deducting the cost of paste (which the matchmakers supply), these bring less than fourpence a gross, and a handy child of ten or twelve can make just about that number in a day's hard work. Facing Mark, stood an old-fashioned mangle, seldom used, because it took two strong women to turn it; to the right was a chest of drawers in the last stages of infirmity, crippled by ill-usage and long service, stained and discoloured like the face of the woman who was proud to own it; to the right a small stove displayed a battered assortment of pots and pans. The window, which overlooked a court, was propped open with an empty bottle. Into the court, half filled with rubbish and garbage, the May sun was streaming, illuminating an atmosphere of squalor and unhomeliness which hung like a fetid fog between the crumbling ceiling and the rotten floor.

"'Ere's Mr. Samphire, mother," said the girl. Already her thin, nimble fingers were at work, while her eyes sparkled with excitement. In the congested districts of the East End the decencies of life go naked and unashamed. 'Liza knew that her mother would burst into virulent speech, and was not disappointed. Bill

was drunk again, and violent. She bared a part of her neck and bosom, showing a hideous bruise. 'Liza stuck out a leg not much thicker than a cricket stump, and offered to pull down her stocking. Another child had an ugly lump within three inches of his temple.

"It wos quite like ole times larst night," said 'Liza, grinning. "'E giv' us all what-for—'e did."

In answer to a question concerning Mr. Bagshot's immediate whereabouts, the wife replied sullenly that she neither knew nor cared; then, remembering Mark's efforts on behalf of the family, she added curtly: "I'd keep out of 'is wy if I wos you. 'E might drop in any minnit."

"And yer've got yer best clothes on," added 'Liza curiously. "Goin' beanfeastin' I dessay, or to a weddin'—yer own, my be," she added sharply.

"Stop yer noise, 'Liza," commanded the mother, wondering vaguely why her visitor was blushing.

"We wos goin' to Chingford to-dy," said the child with the lump on his head; "and mother promised us chops and mashed pertaters, didn't yer, mother?"

"I'd like ter eat chops and mashed pertaters for ever and ever," 'Liza said. Then, meeting Mark's eyes, she added: "That 'ud suit me a sight better than a golden 'arp or a 'evingly crown."

"You shall have chops to-day," said Mark, producing a florin. "Cut along and buy them."

"Mebbee yer aunt 'll let you cook 'em," said Mrs. Bagshot significantly. 'Liza nodded her shrewd little head and vanished; but a minute later she appeared, breathless. "Father's comin'. Yer'd better tyke yer 'ook, sir."

Mark said gravely he would stay. The children were despatched to the aunt's house.

"Yer'd better go, sir," said the wife, now pallid with fear. Mark smiled confidently, shaking his head. The drunkard's heavy, uncertain step was heard in the passage; his voice, thick and raucous, called for his wife.

"A word with you, Bill," said Mark, as the man's huge body darkened the doorway. The giant stared stupidly at the only fellow-creature he respected. Then his hand went mechanically to his head and removed a greasy cap. The woman sat down and began making a matchbox. "I beg your pardon," continued Mark, holding out his hand; "I told you that I would take over your wages each week, and last night I failed you. I am very, very sorry."

His blue eyes expressed much more. The heavy, bloodshot orbs of the huge navvy sought slowly the latent spark of ridicule or contempt. He was just sober enough to understand in some inexplicable way that the tables had been turned. When he saw the parson

he had prepared himself for everything except this. Very awkwardly he took Mark's hand in his own enormous paw.

"Wot yer givin' us?" he growled.

"If the money is not all gone, Bill, I'll take what is left, now."

"Will yer?" said Bill.

"Yes."

Quality confronting quantity smiled steadily, reassuringly. Quantity scowled, wriggled uneasily, and quailed. A chink of silver and copper proclaimed the moral victory.

"Only seven-and-fourpence," said Mark. "You can't go to Chingford with that."

Bill said something which need not be recorded.

"It is like this," said Mark. "I failed you, and you failed me, and your wife and your children have suffered. I can see that you have a splitting headache, and I believe the forest air would do you good. Will you take Mrs. Bagshot and the children to Epping if I pay the piper? I ought to be fined for my part in this."

Bill nodded, none too graciously, and some money was given to Mrs. Bagshot.

"I'm going out of town myself," added Mark, as he took leave of the giant, "but I know I can trust you, Bill."

Mr. Bagshot grinned sheepishly. It is possible,

although not very probable, that he had an elementary sense of humour. Mark hurried away looking at his watch. Just round the corner he charged into the deacon, who offered up fervent thanks that he was unhurt. "I must run," said Mark, pushing on, "or I shall miss my train." He did run till a hansom was found in the Mile End Road. Into this he jumped, bidding the driver use all reasonable haste. None the less as Mark appeared on the platform at Waterloo the Westchester express was rolling slowly out of the station.

"Close shave that," said a quiet voice; "you might have been under the train instead of in it. Was it worth while?"

Mark sank, gasping and coughing, on to the cushions.

"Yes; it was worth while," he exclaimed, and then fainted.

When he recovered consciousness the train was running through Clapham Junction. Mark smelled brandy, and saw the impassive face of a tall, thin stranger bending over him. No other person was in the carriage.

"Keep quiet for five minutes," the stranger commanded.

Mark closed his eyes. His heart was thumping, but his brain worked smoothly. When he saw the train rolling out of the station he had been seized with an absurd conviction that he must overtake and travel by

it to the great happiness awaiting him at Birr Wood. What followed was a blur, only, strangely enough, the voice of the tall, thin man was familiar. He had heard his calm, authoritative accents before; by Heaven! he had heard that voice repeating the same words: "*Keep quiet.*" And they had been spoken to the accompaniment of a thumping, throbbing heart and horrible physical weakness. Who—who was the speaker? Ah . . . ! He remembered. The long, lofty room at Burlington House, the boys in all stages of dressing und undressing, the amazement and dismay on Jim Corrance's face—these unfolded themselves like the shifting scenes of a cinematograph.

"You are Amos Barger," he murmured.

He introduced himself to the doctor, and spoke of the examination at Burlington House.

"You were very kind," said Mark, "but it was an awful experience for a boy, because now——" He paused to reflect that the man opposite had not asked for his confidence.

"Yes—now?" repeated Barger.

"Now, the sense of perpetual imprisonment"—he brought out the grim words slowly—"would not convey such a sense of loss."

The doctor was not sure that he agreed. Could a young man, a boy, measure his loss? Was the capacity for suffering greater in youth?

"I am thinking of one thing," Mark replied, "liberty, the darling instinct of the newly fledged to fly. When you clipped my wings, I had the feeling that I should never move again. The pain was piercing: one could never suffer just such another pang."

"Have you learned to hug your chains?"

"I do not say that. They gall me less."

"But as one grows older"—Amos Barger's face was seamed with distress—"one sees what might have been so clearly. You say I was kind; the other surgeon was and is one of the cast-iron pots. Well, I expect no credit for such kindness. In you I see reflected myself. I am of the weaklings, to whom some incomprehensible Power has said: 'Thus far shalt thou go—and no farther!' And I might have gone far had not my feet, the lowest part of me, failed. I am halting through life when every fibre of my body tells me I was intended to run."

Mark was trying to adjust words to his sympathy, when the other continued abruptly: "Don't say a word! We are poles asunder and must remain so. I am surprised that I spoke at all. You have a faculty, Mr. Samphire, of luring Truth from her well."

The two men looked at each other. Upon the one face disappointment had laid her indelible touch; upon the other glowed the light of hope and faith.

"Before we settle down to our papers"—the doctor

indicated an enormous pile of magazines and journals—"let me remind you that we spun you for the Service because you cannot run, with impunity, to catch trains—or, indeed, anything else."

He picked up a review as he spoke and opened it. Mark eyed him vacantly, reflecting that he had run to catch Betty, not the train. And he had spoken of this meeting as coincidence. Was it coincidence? His heart began to thump once more. When he spoke his voice was hoarse and quavering.

"Thank you. I suppose just now you had time to make a rough-and-ready sort of examination?" The doctor nodded. "Is—is there anything functionally wrong with my heart?"

"Um. It is functionally weak—you knew as much before, but you may live to be sixty if you take care of yourself, which you won't do."

"If others were dependent on me I would take care of myself."

"Oh!" Barger frowned. "You are married—got a family, eh?"

"I have been thinking lately of—of marrying."

The doctor's face was impassive. Mark looked out of the window at the pleasant fields of Surrey, through which the train was running swiftly and smoothly. Was Fate bearing him as swiftly and inexorably out of the

paradise wherein he, poor fool, had already lived in anticipation many years?

"I infer from your silence," he said, "that if you gave a professional opinion it would be against marriage for me?"

"I do not say that," replied the other, shrugging his shoulders; "but it will be time enough for me to give a professional opinion when you ask for one in a professional way. I'm running down to Bournemouth for a holiday, but I shall be at home next Tuesday. Come and see me. I'll look you over, and answer that question to the best of my ability."

"I'll come," said Mark.

"Afternoon or morning?" asked the doctor, whipping out a pencil. "Book your hour!"

"Will three suit you, Mr. Barger?" The doctor's pencil scratched upon the paper. Mark added: "I shall be punctual."

CHAPTER XIV.

A MORAL EXIGENCY.

ARCHIBALD met his brother at Westchester Station, and drove him towards Birr Wood as the shadows lay long and cool upon the white road. A sweet stillness hung over the ancient capital, the stillness which in springtime is eloquent of strife. Everywhere the sap was forcing its way upward; buds were swelling, leaves were bursting from their bonds. And an ethereal mildness permeated the atmosphere, suffusing in golden haze the setting sun.

"Pull up," said Mark.

"Eh?"

"I should like to read you my sermon here and now, within sight of the cathedral. We can walk across the downs afterwards, and arrive in plenty of time to dress for dinner."

"All right," Archie replied, "I'm keen enough to hear it. Was it hot in town? You look rather done."

A groom took the reins and drove off. Mark stared at the cathedral.

"It lies in a golden chalice," he said, indicating the

haze which obscured the insignificant buildings of the town while lightening and revealing the splendid mass of stone, too heavy, too colourless when seen beneath grey skies.

"Good point that," said Archie, nodding his handsome head.

The brothers walked across a strip of down, and found themselves near a clump of trees. Mark pulled from his pocket a sheaf of manuscript, and read aloud.

Archie lay flat on his back. Presently he sat up, staring at the cathedral. Then he fixed his eyes on Mark's face, where they remained, fascinated, till the last word was said.

"Now," Mark commanded, "I want you to declaim a bit of it, standing. You can give it all I cannot. Do you mind?"

Archibald took the manuscript, sensible of emotions and thrills never experienced before. Dominating these was the wish to do as he was asked—to declaim a part of the sermon. He felt a desire to possess himself of it, to incorporate with it his own physical attributes.

"Let yourself go," said Mark. He watched his brother's face intently, thinking that he would exchange the brains which had composed the sermon for the body now bending over it in envy and admiration. Archie had a gift for committing verse to memory. At Harrow he often boasted that he could read through a

long ode of Horace and repeat it without making a blunder.

Presently Archie stood up, his massive proportions outlined against the amber-coloured sky. Although barely thirty, he had acquired a certain dignity of deportment, an air of maturity, in curious contrast to blooming cheeks and shining eyes. This aspect is not uncommon in young clergymen who take themselves seriously. Looking at Archibald Samphire, one might predict that in a few years he would assume the solidity of a pillar of the Church. Already, in the eyes of the spinsters in and around Westchester Close, he was regarded as a staff upon which the weak might safely and gratefully lean; already, when he gave an opinion, soft eyes gazed upward suffused with moisture.

He began to declaim Mark's peroration in a slow, impressive voice, the kind of voice which seems to fill the corners of the soul with echoes at once strange and familiar. The late Mr. Gladstone possessed such a voice. Mark stared at his brother, absorbing every note and gesture. What aptitudes were his for such a part. Listening to him, the younger brother forgot that he had written the phrases which fell with sonorous significance upon the silence of the fields. He was able to judge of what he had done, as if he were hearing the sermon for the first time. Playwrights experience this bitter-sweet pleasure. Lines laboured at for many an hour,

become in the mouth of a great actor or actress so changed, so sublimated by the touch of genius, as to prove unrecognisable, even as a child of peasants adopted by persons of rank may so dazzle the eyes of its mother that it appears for the moment as a stranger. And who shall interpret that same mother's feelings when she sees lavished upon her darling gifts beyond her power to bestow, gifts which serve as symbols of her loss and another's gain?

Mark Samphire listened to his brother with ears lacerated by envy; and because devils tore him he was the more determined to exorcise them, in the hope that what he did and said might hide what he felt. When Archie finished, the younger brother sprang up and seized his hand.

"From the bottom of my soul," he exclaimed, "I believe that this voice of yours will be heard not only in Westchester, but in every cathedral in England."

Archie answered, dully, "If you had my voice, Mark——"

"Ah!" gasped Mark, "if—if——" He paused, and ended quietly, "We need not speak of that."

"You could read this sermon."

"Even that is denied me. I can read the lessons or anything else save what I write myself. Oh, I have tried and tried. Always the lump comes in my throat—and I hear the laugh of that girl. You remember?"

Archie nodded, betraying his sympathy with a shudder. "It was awful," he said, "awful."

He handed the sheets of manuscript to Mark, adding, "It has helped me enormously. I will avail myself of some of your ideas."

"You will redrape my ideas with your words."

"I couldn't use yours, you know."

Mark gazed abstractedly at the cathedral; then he turned to his brother.

"Look here—I give it to you. Do what you like with it. I can't preach it myself. It's not b-b-bad."

He paused as the stammer seized him. "Not bad?" echoed Archibald. "Why it's splendid, splendid!"

"And why shouldn't I help you—my brother?" His voice softened, as he stretched out his thin hand and touched Archibald's mighty arm. "Take it."

Archie hesitated, staring inquiringly at Mark. Mark had always been such a stickler for plain-dealing. Then he remembered what Billy had said: "Take what he gives, *generously*, and so you will best help him to play his part in life."

Mark, meantime, was reflecting that he should like to read in Betty's face the recognition of talents which he was not allowed to proclaim to the world.

"Take it," he repeated. "And, look here, I shall sit beside Betty Kirtling, and afterwards I shall tell her

that I wrote it and persuaded you to preach it. No one else shall know."

Archie, unable to determine the ethics of the matter, sensible in a dull, inarticulate way that he ought to say NO, said—YES. His own sermon was inadequate; there was not time to prepare another; and he lacked the power of interpreting the message of those grey stones yonder. This and more flitted through a mind large enough but somewhat conventionally furnished.

"But what has Betty Kirtling to do with it?" he concluded heavily. "Why tell her? If this is to be between you and me, Mark, why tell her?"

Mark put up his hand to hide a smile.

"It may not be necessary to tell her," he said quietly. "She might guess." Then seeing consternation on Archie's fine brows he added: "No one else will guess, but she—well, she has intuitions."

"Is she going to marry Kirtling?"

Again Mark smiled at his brother's lack of perception. He fenced with the question: "You ought to know; you've seen more of her than I have."

"She's a bit of a flirt."

"No."

"I say, yes. She has flirted with Kirtling, with me, with Pynsent, with Jim Corrance, and with you. I sometimes think that she likes you best, Mark. She might take you, because——"

"Go on."

"Because," Archie explained, "there are two Bettys: the Betty of Mayfair and the Betty of King's Charteris. I heard Mrs. Corrance say that, and it struck me as worth remembering. Most women would only see the Betty of Mayfair, but the other Betty, who takes some finding, has an extravagant admiration of good and a morbid horror of evil. A girl running from evil is likely to rush into the arms of good. I saw my chance there," he added thoughtfully, and again Mark smiled. "I said to myself that the time to catch the witch was just after the London season. I don't mind telling you that I asked her to marry me the day she came back from Goodwood last year. And I was careful about choosing the right place. Depend upon it that tells in these affairs. I chose the Dean's garden: there isn't a sweeter, more peaceful spot under Heaven. But I wasted my time. Hullo! what's the matter?"

"Nothing."

"You're white as a sheet. You ought to take more care of yourself, my dear fellow. I do Sandow's exercises every morning and evening. And I take a grain of calomel once a week. You look liverish. I find that my mind does not work properly unless my body is in tiptop condition. What were we talking of? Oh, yes—Betty Kirtling. Do you know that Harry Kirtling has proposed about five times—generally out hunting?"

But she laughs at him. She cried in the Dea garden."

"Ah?" said Mark softly.

"She won't laugh or cry when the right man speaks and if you are he the sooner you speak the better. She's an enchantress," Archie concluded, "and her money would come in very handy, wouldn't it?"

"Confound her money!" said Mark violently.

CHAPTER XV.

APHRODITE SMILES AND FROWNS.

WHEN Betty met Mark just before dinner the story of the Bagshots was told briefly.

"Is that why you look so discouraged?" she whispered.

He laughed, not quite naturally.

"Surely to—to me, you may show your true feelings. Or do you count me a fair-weather friend?"

Before he had answered Lady Randolph came up and said that Mark must be introduced to the lady he was destined to take in to dinner. Mark found himself bowing before an ample matron who prattled of herbaceous borders and conifers for nearly half an hour. Betty sat beside him, listening to Jim Corrance. Not till the first *entrée* was handed did she find an opportunity to repeat her question to Mark: "Am I a fair-weather friend?"

Mark met her glance; then before answering, he allowed his eyes to rest upon her gown and the opals at her throat. She was wearing a frock of filmy tissues, made, so her dressmaker informed her, in Tokio, and

known to the fashionable world as rainbow tulle. The general effect of this gown, like the jewels which glittered above it, was that of change, and Betty had christened it the Chameleon, because in certain lights it was softly pink, in others a misty blue, in others, again, amber or palest green. Lady Randolph smiled when she saw this wonderful frock, because it suggested certain phases of character of the girl who wore it. Mark, knowing nothing of the relationship between a woman and her clothes, was, none the less, aware that this gown must have cost a deal of money and had not been chosen for wearing qualities.

"You make one think of May," he replied.

"You look at my frock, not at me. Well, if it comes to that, I have a stout tweed upstairs, which defies hurricanes. I know what you're thinking, and you're wrong. I prefer my Harris tweed, but you don't expect me to wear it in May, do you?"

"Contrast tickles you, Betty."

"How am I to take that?"

"You like an ice with a hot sauce."

"No doubt, *you* prefer fried fish."

She glanced at him roguishly, leaning slightly towards him, so that the sleeve of her gown touched his coat. From the airy tissues floated a faint fragrance of roses, and then, drowning it in pungent fumes, came that sickening odour of the slums.

"I loathe fried fish," he whispered. Betty smiled as the lady on the other side of Mark asked him if he knew Father Dolling. Nor was Stepney mentioned again, although it obscured the future in yellow fog. Betty was conscious that Mark eyed her with a persistency for which she could not quite account. The same expression may be found on the faces of emigrants setting sail for a new country, yet looking back on the old, which holds all they know of life and which they may not see again. Betty had never set foot on the deck of an emigrant ship; but she was vaguely apprehensive that this persistency of glance was ominous. Her bosom was heaving when she asked him: "Why do you look at me so queerly?"

"I beg your pardon."

"Why should you? You must know by this time that I don't object to being looked at—by you."

If the words were slightly flippant, the tone in which they were spoken was serious enough. She continued: "Your look is that of a man hesitating to leap. When you were a boy you went free at your fences."

Mark caught his breath. Her meaning was unmistakable. She held out white arms to him, the siren!

"They were dear old days," he murmured.

"You rode hard and straight. Many a lead you gave me. When are we going to have a nice long talk?"

Her voice was trembling. And he stammered as he replied: "T-to-night, if you l-l-like."

"It will be heavenly on the terrace," she whispered. "I saw you slip away last night, and I was tempted to follow you."

"Why didn't you?" he blurted out. Last night—he was reflecting—he had been free.

"I have some pride, Mark. Not much, perhaps."

"I saw Aphrodite by moonlight. She was wonderful."

"She is wonderful," Betty murmured. "Is love dead that you use the past tense? Will you take me to the fountain after dinner?"

"Yes."

A minute later Lady Randolph and the ladies left the dining-room. Mark poured himself out a glass of port. The men were talking of the approaching meeting at Ascot, where one of Lord Randolph's horses was likely to win the Gold Vase. Mark listened to Harry Kirtling's eager voice. How keen he was, this handsome lad. What a worshipper of horse and hound. And his host—old man of the world who had drunk of many cups—seemed to covet this gold vase as the one thing desirable. And when he had won it, the cup would glitter upon his sideboard among a score of similar trophies unnoticed and forgotten.

"I have the sermon almost by heart," Archie whis-

pered to his brother. "I read it over three times before dinner. It's odd your treatment of the theme did not occur to me, particularly as I live in the Close."

"One doesn't see the Matterhorn when one is climbing it," Mark observed. "If you want to love Westchester live in Whitechapel."

"I couldn't live in Whitechapel," Archie replied; "it wouldn't suit me at all. Still, as a means to an end—Lord Randolph says that you—er—know what you're at."

"Do I?" said Mark. Then he laughed and struck his brother genially on the shoulder, adding: "At any rate, you know what you're at; but to men like me ignorance of the ultimate aim has its value. Perhaps because I don't quite know what I'm doing I take pleasure in doing it."

"You're a queer chap," said his brother, "and you grow queerer as you grow older. You mean that you would sooner have two birds in the bush than one in the hand."

"The nightingales in the bush for me," cried Mark.

"I want the bird in the hand," said Archibald solemnly.

"You will cook your bird, old fellow, and eat it with all accessories: bread sauce, rich gravy, the succulent *salade Romaine*, but you will never hear it sing. A bird in the hand never sings."

The night was very still when Mark and Betty descended the stone steps which led to the fountain: a lovers' night, fragrant with a thousand essences. Silvery shafts of moonlight pierced the darkness of the park, and fell tenderly on the nymphs about the fountain. But Aphrodite was not yet revealed, for her pool lay in shadow guarded by sentinel yews and cypress.

Mark disappeared for a moment; the surface of the pool was troubled; then, with a soft, sibilant sound, the waters rose and enveloped the goddess.

"We are in the nick of time," whispered Mark.

As he spoke the moon topped the trees. For a moment a white flame seemed to sparkle round the brows of Aphrodite; then the features were revealed: the languorous half-opened eyes, the dimpled cheeks, the adorable mouth with its shy smile. The sculptor had suggested the admixture of fear and delight, a shrinking from the embrace of the unknown element, a virginal protest indicated by a gesture of taper fingers and slender shoulders, a protest overpowered by a subtle relaxing of the whole body, the nymph surrendering herself to Life and Love.

Mark turned to Betty. She met his eyes and then turned aside her own. The nymph with the phorminx smiled. And the *amorini* looked on approving. Mark had the hunger of Romeo on his thin face, the hunger

of the beggar who has seen white loaves through the windows of a baker's shop. At Milan there is a hole in the wall whence, long ago, unhappy prisoners looked out upon tables spread with savoury viands: wretches condemned to starve, within sight and smell of baked meats and sparkling wines.

Mark looked again at Betty's face, now pensive, although the dimples were deepening. The elusive tints of the gown, transmuted by the moonbeams into a silvery radiance, shimmered like the watery tissues of the goddess; the opals at her throat might have been dewdrops.

"Dear Betty," he whispered.

She lifted her heavy lids. The eyes beneath were dark as the shadows cast by the cypress, and troubled as the waters of the pool. What darkened and troubled them? What intuition or premonition of sorrow and suffering? But Mark saw the underglow which reflected the flames of his heart.

As they gazed at each other the moon glided discreetly behind a cloud, and a soft darkness obscured all things, out of which came the music of the fountain; a symphony of kisses falling with melodic rhythm upon the face of Aphrodite. In a clump of syringa beyond the Italian garden a nightingale trilled.

He knew that he had only to speak the word, to hold out his arms, and she would come to him. She

was smiling, but with a sadness which underlay joy: such sadness as may be seen sometimes in the face of a child, who, coming into possession of a long-desired object, is confronted with the possibility of losing it.

He took her hand, gripping it.

"Mark, what is the matter?"

Her voice rose in a crescendo of distress, as Mark staggered, coughing violently, gasping for breath. Terror-stricken, she supported him to a stone bench hard by, upon which he sank.

"It is a p-p-passing weakness," he stammered. "I am better already."

"You have been overworking yourself in those detestable slums," she said vehemently.

"That is the truth," he answered. "I shall take a holiday."

"A long holiday," she whispered, meeting his eyes. But he saw the face of the tall thin doctor and his lean hand raised in protest. "And you must have someone, some dear friend, to look after you."

Her fingers pressed his arm.

"Yes," he said eagerly. "With such a friend I should grow strong again."

"There are places, earthly paradises, which I've read about. In Samoa or Tahiti——"

He interrupted her, passionately.

"Don't speak of them, *yet*. Betty, I must turn the key of the fountain. I cannot speak for, for a few days. Do you understand? If you could read my heart. If—if——"

Again a terrible fit of coughing overcame him.

"Mark, I do understand. We understand each other. You are right. The key of the fountain must be turned. I'll do it, not you." She sprang up lightly, ran to the cypress, and turned the key. When she came back he was staring at the goddess, white and shivering.

Before she went to bed, Betty was cross-examined by Lady Randolph.

"Then he hasn't actually spoken?"

"He will," Betty declared. "And within a week."

"And Stepney?"

"I'd sooner live with him in Stepney——"

"And eat fried fish?"

"And smell fried fish—it's the smell I hate—than live in a garden of roses by Bendemeer's stream with anybody else."

"My poor Betty, you have the disease badly."

Betty, however, did not mention Mark's physical weakness to her friend. Instead, she prattled of love for nearly an hour.

The elder woman told herself that she was listening to an idyll; but, vividly as the tale was presented, a sense of unreality pervaded it; the conviction that, as a

child would put it, the story was too good to be true. But because of its goodness Lady Randolph was the more touched by it. Your honest cynic respects good, although he rails against its counterfeit. Moreover, in this joyous acclamation of love, Lady Randolph resumed for a few moments her own youth. It seemed incredible that she should have grown old, and critical, and distrustful. Love touched her with healing fingers, and she became as a little child, free from the dull limitations of age and experience.

"You have been so sympathetic," said Betty, when she bade her old friend good night, "but I know, of course, that in your heart of hearts you think us two fools."

"Not fools, Betty. Babes in the wood, perhaps, playing amongst the rose leaves. Good night, my dear; go and dream of your lover."

But when the door was shut, the woman of the world sighed, and her shrewd face puckered into many wrinkles.

"Am I a fool?" she asked herself. "Should I have stopped this? I fear that it will come to nothing, but then it will be everything, everything, everything to them, while it lasts."

Meantime, Archibald was in Mark's bedroom, talking of the sermon to be preached on the morrow. He had a score of unessential corrections to suggest. A

slight amplification here, another word there, an apt quotation, revealed the student of effect, the rhetorician. Mark admitted that his brother had improved the manuscript.

"I have thought of nothing else," said Archie. "At first I disliked preaching another man's sermon, but now I feel as if a lot of it were mine."

"It is all yours," said Mark, smiling. "I have given it to you, haven't I? Only remember, Betty must know."

"Why?" demanded Archie. "Women will talk and——" he shrugged his broad shoulders. "If the Dean heard of it—— The Dean, you know, is civil, but he has a cut-and-dried manner which I find rather trying. He's a radical, too. We always have had radical deans at Westchester. With my political views, my faith in institutions, and——er——so forth he is not in accord. He told me with really amazing candour that I owed my preferment entirely to my vocal chords. I should have thought a Samphire of Pitt had claims, but no—he repudiates all that. His own father was quite obscure: a bookseller, I've been told, only don't quote me. One can't be too careful in a cathedral town. Well, not to put a fine point on it, the Dean underrates me. I've felt it keenly. When I was singing to him the other night, in his own drawing-room, he went to sleep: he did, indeed. Still, to give him

his due, he is almost a monomaniac on the subject of the cathedral, and this sermon ought to surprise him. . . ."

Mark nodded absently. His face seemed thinner and paler since he had parted from Betty less than an hour ago. As in a dream, he heard Archie's voice droning on about the Dean and his Chapter, but he saw only Betty's face, Betty's eyes, which seemed to fill the universe. She loved him. Infirm of body, halting of speech, he had been able to inspire passion in so splendid a fellow-creature. The glory of it filled his soul.

Archie, who must not be blamed for enjoying the sound of his own voice, talked on and on. It was past midnight. Down in the smoking-room young Kirtling, one could wager, was holding forth on the subject of fox-hunting. Jim Corrance, with an ironical smile upon his slightly melancholy face, was listening politely, thinking, no doubt, of some future "coup" in the money market. Lord Randolph, with a long, thin cigar in his mouth, was certainly alive to the possibility of a political crisis. Pynsent, watching the three other men from the depths of an immense chair, was busy fitting their faces into a picture. All this, and much more, passed through Mark's mind.

"Good night," Archie was saying. "We've had a long yarn, haven't we?"

He stood up, extending his hand, which Mark

grasped. Opposite to the brothers stood a large cheval glass. Mark's eye fell on this, and straightway the gracious image of Betty vanished, and in her place he saw himself and Archie standing beside each other with linked hands. The contrast between the brothers was so startling that the younger allowed an exclamation to leap from his lips.

"Look," he said, when Archie lifted his handsome brows in interrogation; "who would believe that the same mother bore us?"

The mirror, indeed, seemed to take pleasure in making more of Archibald and less of Mark than was warrantable. The fine massive figure, the smooth, fresh-coloured cheeks, the flaxen curls of the one accentuated the leanness, the pallor, the fragility of the other. Only when you looked at the eyes you recognised the vitality of spirit in Mark. Lady Randolph described the eyes of the brothers aptly enough, when she said that Mark's reminded her of fire and Archie's of water.

"You will fill out," said Archibald, placidly regarding the curves of his person.

Mark laid his fingers upon his brother's chest.

"Forty-three inches," said Archie. "I had a doctor look me over the other day. He said I was as sound a specimen as he'd ever examined."

"Good night," said Mark abruptly.

When Archie had left the room, Mark returned to the mirror.

"Am I envious?" he muttered. "Not for my own sake, God knows, but for hers. If I were only strong——"

He began to undress, thinking of the doctor and the train. Curiously enough the two were connected. The train rushing on and on through the quiet landscape, the doctor and he whirled on with it, fellow-passengers for a few brief minutes, meeting, parting, and meeting again in obedience to some Power who rules that good shall triumph ultimately over evil. To Mark this was and always had been a sheet-anchor. At Harrow, at Barbizon, in the pulpit of the church in King's Charteris, he had submitted to the Divine Will; but, now, if the greatest thing on earth were denied him would he be able to bow his head in resignation? Every pulse in his body throbbed a passionate—"No."

CHAPTER XVI.

WESTCHESTER CATHEDRAL.

It happened that Lord Randolph was anxious to consult the Dean of Westchester upon some point of municipal philanthropy, so he drove into the town earlier than usual on Whit-Sunday. Archibald accompanied him, Lord Randolph driving his own pair, which were never driven by anybody else. When the horses were working well into their collars, Lord Randolph turned to the preacher-elect and described, not without humour, his own pangs before the delivery of an important speech in the House of Commons.

"Only I," he concluded, "had the impending horror of a scathing reply from the other side. You black-coated gentlemen have an immense advantage there, an advantage which I hope you, my boy, will never abuse. Is it indiscreet to ask what theme you have taken?"

Archie answered the question by repeating a phrase of Mark's, which summed up, aptly enough, the scope and purpose of the sermon. Lord Randolph raised his grizzled brows.

"Um! I like to see a young man tackling a subject bigger than himself: and the bigger the man, the

bigger ought to be his subject. Often," he concluded abruptly, "it is the other way. You are ambitious, Archibald?"

"Yes," the minor canon confessed; and then, afraid of saying too much, he held his tongue. Lord Randolph respected his silence, supposing that the preacher was occupied with his thoughts. Nor did he mention that he expected to meet the Prime Minister at the deanery, who doubtless would attend service in the cathedral. If this young fellow acquitted himself with distinction, his sermon might prove a stepping-stone to great things. A week ago no man knew that a maker of prelates was coming to Westchester, certainly not the Dean, otherwise he might have elected to preach himself. Lord Randolph smiled with a slightly cynical curl of the lip. The Dean, as has been said, was radical in politics, but he probably foresaw that his party, now in power, was not likely to endure for ever.

Lord Randolph left his horses in charge of the groom, and descended at the ancient gate which leads to the Close. At the same moment two figures emerged from the shadows of the deanery porch. "There is the Prime Minister," said Lord Randolph. "I shall have pleasure, Archie, introducing you to him."

"By Jove!" exclaimed the young man.

A moment later the most eloquent speaker in the kingdom was holding Archibald Samphire's hand and

peering into his face. The great man had appreciation of physical beauty, and an eye for a personality. Archie blushed: a tribute ever welcome to genius.

"Our preacher to-day," said the Dean.

"Indeed?"

The young man's hand was retained in the ample grasp of the Prime Minister, who asked a dozen questions, enveloping Archie with that magnetic current, which seemed to emanate from him in fuller measure than from any other of his generation.

"I shall look forward to your sermon," he concluded. "I am sure it will be worthy of this place"—he spoke with solemnity—"and"—his voice changed—"and of—you. You have the gift of eloquence: the lips, the eyes, the brow. I hope we shall meet again soon."

He passed on, smiling genially, leaving the gratified Archie alone with his thoughts. Lord Randolph might have told him that the speaker scattered seed of kindly words wherever he went, and who shall say—even now—what they brought forth? A kindly word lingers in the ear when a kind action may be lost to sight.

The party from Birr Wood entered the cathedral some five minutes before the time when service began. Betty knelt down to repeat the prayer which she had learnt when a child from Mrs. Corrance. She was

about to rise, when she happened to steal a glance at Mark kneeling beside her. At that moment she became sensible of what may be termed spiritual giddiness. She seemed to be transported to heights where head and heart failed. A glimpse of the world unseen was vouchsafed her: an empyrean in which she and Mark moved alone amongst the hosts of Heaven. The vision was so vivid, so seizing (to use the word in its French significance) that she felt herself trembling beneath the awe and mystery of it. And then an impulse, which, in its material aspect, had assailed her once before when attempting to scale a certain peak in the Alps, constrained her to look down into what seemed a fathomless abyss. In the mist and shadows of this vast gulf a dull, opaque object challenged attention, and she knew this was the earth: a pin's point in the celestial horizon, borrowing aught it possessed of light and heat from the place wherein she stood. And with this knowledge fear became articulate. The horror of giddiness which paralysed her was not due to the fact that she had been whirled to heights, but to the sense that she might fall headlong from them.

The deep notes of the organ put to flight the vision. Still kneeling, she looked upward into the roof of the chancel, with its delicately carved and gilded ornaments, thence passing to the radiance and simplicity of the nave beyond. Above her head, upon the stone

partitions on each side of the sanctuary, stood six carved and gilded mortuary chests, surmounted by the crowns and inscribed with the names of the Saxon princes whose crumbling bones they contain; at her feet almost was the tomb of a great king, slain in the plentitude of his strength and power; hard by were the magnificent chantries of the prelates who sanctified their time, their talents, and their money to the embellishment of this house of God. In one of the chantries, where during his lifetime he spent, daily, many hours of devotion, lies the figure of a man, represented as an emaciated corpse wrapped in a winding-sheet. He it was who caused to be carved on the soaring roof of the choir the sorrowful emblems of our Lord's Passion: the crown of thorns, the nails, the hammer, the scourge, the reed and sponge, the lance, the cross. And who can doubt that he was inspired to so exalt these symbols of the suffering which redeemed mankind? Who can doubt, gazing at the shrunken limbs and careworn features of the prelate, that his untiring labour had caused him innumerable hours of pain serenely endured because he knew that by pain alone Man is purified. He and his successors and predecessors, and the armies of masons they employed, had lived and died that this, the work of their heads and hands, might endure for generations, a monument of the faith which can move mountains of stone and change

them into forms of surpassing loveliness. Had they laboured in vain?

Betty rose from her knees as the choir entered the sanctuary. At the same moment Mark touched her arm and glanced across the chancel. Following his eyes, she saw the familiar face of the Prime Minister. Other eyes lingered upon that notable head, now bent in meditation upon the tomb of the king. Mark touched her again. Archibald Samphire passing by, stately in surplice and hood. The statesman raised his head, and stared keenly at the priest. A half-smile of recognition and encouragement curved his thin lips. Archie, conscious, perhaps, that the eyes of the mighty were on him, looked neither to right nor left. His face was as that of a graven image. "He is cold," thought Betty. "Does he expect, I wonder, to warm others?"

The service began. At that time a certain boy was singing in the Westchester choir who became famous afterwards as the finest treble of his day, combining, till his voice broke, the freshness of youth with the art which crowns a long and patient apprenticeship. Already musical folk were talking of the lad and coming from far to hear him. The choir sang in unison the first verse of the *Venite*, but above their voices, above the sonorous peal of the organ, floated the aerial notes of the boy. So sublimated was the quality of this child's voice that Betty—and many another—looked up,

believing for the moment that these flakes of melody were dropping from heaven. The joyousness which informed each crystalline phrase electrified the ear. This indeed was a clarion call to rejoice! The pain and perplexity in Betty's soul fled, exorcised by this glad spirit, blythe as a skylark carolling in the skies. She glanced at Mark. His eyes were shining, his face aglow with pleasure. Farther down stood Harry Kirtling, unmoved; and on each side were rows of men and women, some perfunctorily praising God, others gazing with lack-lustre eyes into the past or future, a few touched to the quick by the message and the instrument by which it was conveyed. Amongst these, one face stood out of the crowd, conspicuous by its pallor and the lines of suffering which scored cheek and mouth and brow. Unmistakably, Death had marked this victim of an incurable malady for his own. Yet, excepting Mark's, no countenance in that great congregation revealed more clearly the happiness and contentment which proclaim success. Here was the vitality of the life immortal flaming upon the ashes of the dead; here was one rejoicing in the salvation of a soul, caring nothing because the body was about to be destroyed!

The choir sang on together till the eighth verse was reached:

“To-day, if ye will hear His voice,
Harden not your hearts!”

These lines were delivered in *recitativo* by the basses, and then repeated by the choir. "*Harden not your hearts!*" The injunction rolled down the aisles and transepts; it broke in thunder against the hoary walls, as it has broken for two thousand years against the faithless generations; and then, in the silence which followed, there descended a flute-like echo, emphasising the opportunity and reimposing the condition. To-day, this moment, *if* ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts!

Psalms and Lessons succeeded.' Archie read the latter. Betty, who had not heard him read since his appointment as minor canon, amended her conviction that he could not warm others. He had that persuasive-ness of diction which drapes even the crude and commonplace with samite, and, so garbed, passes like an angel through all doors.

"For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

If this indeed were true, how many of those around Betty Kirtling were of the quick, how many of the dead? How many, again, were asleep, lulled to slumber by indifference? She saw Pynsent staring at Archie's face. Unconsciously he had raised his right hand, as if it held a brush poised above a canvas. Beside him sat Jim Corrance engrossed in thought. Jim was frowning; his lips were shut, as if he feared

that information of commercial value might leak from them. It struck Betty, with a certain poignant suddenness, that Jim, dear old Jim, had lost his look of youth, and she wondered vaguely whether or not his mother had marked the loss—and regretted it. Was his face becoming hard? Was it setting into that inexorable mask of death of which the apostle spoke? She shivered and looked away, meeting the curious gaze of Lady Randolph. Then with an effort she restrained her vagabond thoughts and eyes, and listened attentively to the voice of the reader.

Afterwards she wondered if what followed would have impressed her so profoundly had it not been for what went before. At the moment she was merely sensible that her perceptive and intuitive faculties were sharpened to keen edge. She knew with conviction that a veil had been lifted, that she saw clearly and in true proportion what was vital and everlasting.

When Archie ascended the pulpit, Betty prepared herself for an anti-climax, Lady Randolph, for a nap. "*Ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house.*" The preacher repeated his text, and paused. The Prime Minister inclined his ear in a gesture familiar to all who knew him; the Dean polished his spectacles and replaced them, as if seeking to see more clearly what hitherto had been obscured. Silence, always significant, suffused itself throughout the cathedral.

The sermon began as a history of the cathedral, presented with a dramatic sense of the relation borne by Gothic architecture to the renaissance of spirituality in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. But soon the preacher passed from the sanctuary in which he stood straight to the hearts of the congregation. It has been well said that neither writer nor painter lives who can set forth adequately on paper or canvas what such artists as Wykeham and Fox expressed in stone. And who dares to portray the house spiritual: the house hewn out of living stones under the direction of the Supreme Architect? But if the whole transcends description, the parts invite it. Archibald paused before taking the stride from the abstract to the concrete. When he spoke again his voice was troubled. Smooth persuasiveness gave place to a rougher eloquence. So far, admirable and inspiring though the sermon had been, it revealed rather the scholar and idealist than the practical man of the world. The cathedral, for instance, interpreted the past. It enshrined the faith and patience of yesterday. What message did it hold for the strivers of to-day?

Archie answered that question in the last half of the sermon, and, answering it, displayed a knowledge of humanity which Mark had gleaned in Stepney and Whitechapel. All that is affecting and pathetic in life was laid bare, but with a delicacy of phrase, a poignancy

of suggestion, a sense of proportion, which thrilled rather than dismayed. A sane optimism informed even deformity. It was characteristic of Mark (and most uncharacteristic of the preacher) that he dwelt tenderly upon the inglorious parts of the temple: the rough flints, the bricks, the clay, the mortar! Of the glittering ornaments he said little, of the stone which the builders rejected much. His congregation listened with an attention which never waned. The children stared spellbound at the splendid figure in the pulpit. To them, as to their elders, came the assurance of work to do worth the doing, and the conviction that such work, however slight, brought with it a reward: the Pentecostal gift. Here Mark had attempted to define the unpardonable sin: the rejection of the spiritual and the acceptance of the carnal life. And then followed the apostrophe. When it was delivered, smiles curved the children's lips; men felt the current of their blood flowing strong and free in their veins. For a sound as from heaven had filled the house where they were sitting, and gladness of heart scourged once more from God's temple disease and despair and death.

After the service, the Dean took Archie's hand and congratulated him. "You have spoken with tongues," he said, in his too cold voice, which impressed but never thrilled. Archibald hesitated, flushed, clutched at op-

portunity and missed it. The Dean turned aside as others approached. To them Archie listened, wondering if Betty knew. The Dean, watching him, amended previous estimates. "The man is really modest," he told his wife at luncheon. "He blushed and stammered when I spoke to him."

Archie went into the Close, accompanied by a prebendary, whom, as it happened, he had slight reason to dislike. As he left the cathedral he saw a small group: the Prime Minister, Lord Randolph, and Lady Randolph; Pynsent and Jim Corrance were standing beyond these. The Prime Minister acclaimed the preacher in Latin, holding out both hands:

"I salute Chrysostom," and then he added simply: "Thank you—thank you!"

Once more Archibald clutched at opportunity, but the prebendary, eyeing him with jealous glance, stood between him and confession. Then Lord Randolph and his wife, Pynsent and Corrance, swelled a chorus of felicitation. Archie was feeling that the truth must be written on his scarlet face. But his friends, like the Dean, attributed confusion to modesty.

"Here he is!"

Betty's voice rose above the chorus. Pynsent made way for her. Mark followed, looking pale and worn.

"Oh, Archie, what can I say?" Her face was radiant. He did not suspect that she wished to apologise

for every idle jest at his expense, for every thought and word (and there were many) which now seemed to stain not him but her, the shallow-witted creature, seeing the ludicrous and blind to what lay beneath. "I shall never chaff you again, never."

Archie, however, was looking at Mark. At the moment he realised that unless he spoke, Mark would hold his peace. Mark had not told Betty yet. The group around him was breaking up. The Prime Minister had his watch in his hand. Lord Randolph had turned his back. Betty began again, excitedly:

"And I might have missed it. Aren't you going to shake hands with him, Mark?"

Silently Mark extended his hand. At his brother's touch Archie stammered out: "I owe everything to Mark: he helped me; he has always helped me."

Mark's eyes demanded more; his grasp tightened. The others, hearing but not understanding, shuffled somewhat impatiently. Betty frowned, wondering why Mark was so unresponsive. Surely he would say something. Then she remembered that since they left the south door of the cathedral he had said nothing. Was it possible that he grudged his brother this triumph? From any other man such jealousy would have provoked pity and sympathy, but she had loved and respected Mark because she had never been able to conceive of

him as being mean or petty-minded. Yet, long ago, he had confessed that ambition was his besetting sin.

"We shall not be home till two," said Lady Randolph. "Come, all of you!"

She bustled away, followed by the others. Archibald dropped his brother's hand, and strode off in the direction of his lodgings. He would not join the party till after the afternoon's service. Betty glanced at Mark.

"You never congratulated him. He went away hurt, poor fellow! Mark—how could you? And it was your praise he wanted. I saw that. He looked hungrily at you."

Then Mark laughed, while the shadows in Betty's eyes deepened. That she was perplexed he saw, that she was deeply distressed he had yet to learn. And to give him his due he was thinking at that moment not of Betty, nor of himself, but of Archie. He regretted that he had not told Betty the truth, but her admiration had been so great, her praise so extravagant, that he had shrunk from the assertive: "I did it. I wrote it." Now, if he spoke, Betty being a woman of likes and dislikes, would scorn his brother and make no effort to hide that scorn. All this whirled through his brain while he laughed, because she had misinterpreted the expression of hunger in Archie's eyes.

"Don't laugh!" she enjoined sharply. "Did you not think his sermon splendid?"

"It sounded better than I expected," he said, wondering if she would guess. He made so certain that she would guess. It amazed him that the lynx-eyed Lady Randolph, her sagacious lord, Pynsent, Corrance had been so easily befooled. He had yet to learn that the world is equally prone to believe that a fool may prove a sage as a sage a fool. The unexpected excites and disturbs the reason.

"We have all underrated him," she rejoined, more gently.

At tea-time Lord Randolph returned to Birr Wood, bringing Archibald with him. After tea Lord Randolph drew Mark aside and told him that the Prime Minister had asked many questions concerning the Samphires of Pitt.

"I told him," said he, "that your maternal grandfather had a strain of Wesley's and Sheridan's blood. It seems that he knew and loved him. He must have been a remarkable man."

"My mother adored him," Mark replied. "I can just recall some of the things she said about him."

"Justice was not done him, I fear. He served faithfully ungrateful masters. Perhaps he ought to have been a preacher. At any rate his mantle seems to have descended upon your brother."

He moved away, wondering why Mark had shown so little enthusiasm.

Presently Lady Randolph, under cover of the chatter, said a few words:

"I account for our surprise this morning in one word: Inspiration. There was Goldsmith, for instance. Not that I wish to make comparisons. Archibald is no idiot to be sure, very much the contrary, still I never gave him credit for being a humourist."

"A humourist, Lady Randolph?"

"What? You missed the humour in his sermon, you? Why if I hadn't cried I must have laughed. What was the keynote of that sermon? Renunciation. Eh? The word was not mentioned. Very true, but it informed every phrase. It might have been written by a man who had failed in this world, but who knew that elsewhere his failure would be reckoned as success. The stone that the builders rejected became the head of the corner. Well, so far as this world is concerned, Archie has always succeeded. He has genius in being able to put himself in the place of the man who has failed."

"And the humour?"

"I am coming to that. I go the round of this huge house every Saturday morning, and the housekeeper will tell you that my eyesight is unimpaired. I went into your room, sir, and what did I see?"

"Spare me," said Mark.

"*Soit!* I went into your brother's room, I declare

he has prettier things on his dressing-table than I have on mine. And well-cut boots in trees, *eau de Lubin* on his washstand, and on his chest of drawers—a trouser-press! Oh! there's no harm in such things, of course, but that sermon this morning and the trouser-press! The golden sandals—treed! The halo sprinkled with *eau de Lubin*! And yet, and yet he made me cry: hardened old sinner that I am. So I say that he is a genius, and an unconscious humourist, and a Chrysostom, and altogether a most amazing person. Now, go and talk to a younger woman."

Mark obeyed. His old friend eyed his thin figure as he crossed the room.

"How much help did he give his brother?" she muttered to herself.

Archie was surrounded by joyous prattlers. Harry Kirtling, Pynsent, and Jim Corrance were with Betty.

"We are still jawing about your brother's sermon," said Harry Kirtling. "I am sorry to say I missed the first part. A line from my stud groom this morning rather upset me. Dear old Trumpeter has navicular. My best gee—worst luck! Well, by Jove! that sermon cheered me up; it did, indeed. I felt confoundly ashamed of myself and my own small affairs. That was the effect it had on me. But Corrance and Pynsent say it made 'em blue."

"Every man worth his salt wants to be at the head

of the procession here," Pynsent explained, in his slightly nasal New England accent.

"Archie stuck his knife into me and turned it," said Corrance.

"You've misinterpreted the whole thing," Mark replied eagerly. "Every man has his work here, but who knows what relation it may bear, if any, to the work which comes after? Great achievements dwindle into insignificance within a d-decade. Why, then, should we t-tear ourselves to p-p-p——"

Meeting Betty's eyes, the abominable lump came into his throat. He paused abruptly, turning aside. Archie, who had joined them, said with authority:

"Mark is right. We make a mad effort to scribble our names upon the quicksands of time." (Mark, with his back still turned so the group, smiled.) "And we die wretched," Archie went on, "because Time's tides wash out our writing within an hour. This struggle after personal recognition is a certain sign of decadence in a nation."

Mark looked at Betty, who was listening to the speaker with faintly glowing cheeks. Pynsent and Corrance seemed to be impressed, because Archie as preacher (thus Mark reflected) had bewitched them. Yesterday, only yesterday, an obscure minor canon would not have so delivered himself; if he had, the others would have scoffed at him as a prig.

"Are we to fight without pay, my dear boy?"

Lord Randolph had approached, cynical, yet interested.

"Forlorn hopes were led before the Victoria Cross was given," murmured Archie deferentially. Then he remembered that Mark had said this, and that Mark was present. At this thought he blushed vividly, once more confirming an impression of modesty. He tried to make amends to Mark. "Why, Mark and I were speaking of this only last night. What did you say, Mark?"

"N-nothing worth r-repeating," stammered Mark.

"He said that a desperate enterprise never lacked men to attempt it. And what allures men to almost certain death? The pay, Lord Randolph? You would be the last to affirm that. Have we not heard of many a noble fellow falling, maybe, within a few feet of the goal, seeing with dying eyes comrades triumphantly scaling the heights, knowing that the success of those comrades was rooted in the bodies over which they had passed to victory? And these—the failures—have died with a glad shout upon their lips; they have been found horribly mutilated, but with a smile on their dead faces. Shall we pity such men, Lord Randolph, or envy them?"

Mark slipped from the room before Lord Randolph replied. Outside the door he discovered that his fists were clenched.

CHAPTER XVII.

SURRENDER!

ON the following Tuesday, when Mark reached Amos Barger's house, he was told that the doctor could not see him for a quarter of an hour. Mark followed a manservant into a back dining-room ponderously furnished with mahogany and horsehair. The paper on the wall was hideous in pattern and colour; the wainscoting was grained in imitation of oak; on the square table in the centre of the room lay the comic papers and some society weeklies, amongst them *Kosmos* and *Mayfair*. Under the latter was *The Bistoury*. Mark paced up and down, pausing now and again to look out of a window which commanded a prospect of dingy back-walls and chimney-pots. From the front of the house a charming glimpse of the trees in Cavendish Square redeemed the dull uniformity of the street. Mark had noticed how green was their foliage, recalling the fact that soot is as Mellin's food to the vegetable world. His fancy seized this fact and played with it. Soot, the most defiling of things, transmuted by some amazing process into a brilliant pigment. What a text for a

sermon. Presently Mark approached the bookcase—a solid, glazed affair as heavy, doubtless, as the works within. To his surprise, he found the lightest of fiction, and every volume showed signs of use. Barger, he reflected, was a wise man to laugh with Anstey and Frank Stockton, but he ought really to buy some new furniture. Then he remembered that Barger had admitted failure, more or less. Possibly, these grim Penates had been taken at a low valuation from the outgoing tenant. With these fugitive speculations he escaped from his own thoughts and fears.

When he went upstairs the doctor, while shaking hands, eyed him keenly.

"I am the better for my holiday," said Mark.

Barger nodded, and pointed to a chair.

"You said in the train I might live to make old bones. Weakness of heart is not a bar to marriage—is it?"

"Very much the contrary," said the doctor grimly. "And if you are sound in other respects——"

"I have never known what it is to be really ill," said Mark eagerly; "and I don't think I've had breakfast in bed since I left Harrow."

"And not often there, eh? Never shammed at school did you when the first lesson was a bit stiff?"

"The first lesson never was very stiff to me," Mark replied.

Barger, with impassive face, began an examination, which lasted longer than Mark expected. At the end Mark said nervously: "The heart is not weaker than it was?"

"Your heart need not cause you any serious anxiety," said the doctor slowly.

"Thank God!" exclaimed the young man. "From your face I feared a different verdict."

"There is other trouble, Mr. Samphire. *Very* serious trouble; and the two in combination—! The lungs are affected."

Then Mark smiled pitifully. His premonition of disaster was justified.

"You can speak f-f-frankly," he stammered.

The doctor spoke frankly, making plain in his precise phraseology what was and what might be. "You will take another opinion," he concluded, "but it is not a matter of opinion, but of fact. This," he pointed to his slethoscope, "never lies. Doctors do sometimes."

"I thank you for not lying to me," said Mark gravely.

Barger burst out vehemently:

"Your only chance lies in the most careful diet, a life in the open air; and even then the issue is doubtful."

"And marriage?"

"Out of the question."

"But if I got better? Should I be justified in asking a woman to wait?"

His voice was dry and husky. Barger shook his

head. The trouble might be staved off for a time, but there was always the probability of return.

"You have neglected your body," he said irritably. "You have defrauded it of all things essential, and it has taken its revenge. Oh, you parsons who think of others, why can't you see that you would serve the world better if you thought more of yourselves?"

Mark could read the sympathy and pity latent beneath frowns and irritability. He held out his hand. Barger continued:

"You must go to Sir John Drax. He's a specialist on tuberculosis. Shall I write him a note? He lives near here, in Welbeck Street."

Barger scribbled a few lines, and handed them to Mark.

"See him at once," he commanded; "suspense is unendurable."

Mark went his way, so blinded by misery that in crossing the street he barely escaped being run over by a big van. He sprang to one side in obedience to the instinct of self-preservation.

Within half an hour Sir John Drax had confirmed Barger's diagnosis and prognosis. Then he asked bluntly if his patient had independent means. An affirmative simplified the case. He, too, prescribed fresh air, simple food, and moderate exercise.

"If I stick to my work in Bethnal Green?"

"You will find yourself in Kensal Green."

"And marriage——?"

"In your present condition, madness, my dear sir, madness!"

Mark climbed on to the top of the first 'bus which was rolling eastward. As he did so he heard a small boy proclaiming the name of a winner. The name seemed familiar. Then he remembered that it was one of Harry Kirtling's horses. He could see Kirtling's square, stalwart body and the handsome sun-tanned face above it. Of all the bitter minutes in his life, this one seemed to be the bitterest.

When he reached the Mission, pressing work distracted his attention for some hours. He did it as thoroughly as usual, wondering what he should write to Betty when he was at liberty to go to his own room. He wondered also that his friends made no comment upon his appearance. Surely he carried scars. A small glass hung in the committee-room where he was sitting. He glanced at it. Outwardly he was unchanged.

Not till the clock struck nine did he find himself alone. He wrote a letter to Betty, a long letter, which he read and destroyed. The next letter was short, curt, cold; he burned this also. A few minutes later, feeling pain in his hands, he discovered that his nails had lacerated the flesh. Then he knew that a fight for life and reason was beginning. The demons were crying

"Surrender!" If he died to-night, Betty would be free; if he lingered on for half a dozen years, she might deem herself bound to a dying man. Virility repudiated such a sacrifice.

"O God," he cried, "let me die to-night!"

Outside, the world of Whitechapel roared in derision. All Mark had known of poverty, of vice, of squalor, swelled into a chorus of despair. Here, in the heart of the slums, in an atmosphere tainted by the dead bodies of hundreds of thousands who had perished cursing God and man, he felt that he was choking for fresh air, that the pestilential fumes of every evil place into which he had entered were destroying him.

He sat down limply on the edge of his bed, wondering whether the end would come soon, telling himself that he was dead already. At any rate his work was done; he would leave the Mission on the morrow. The animal instinct to slink off to some lonely spot where none might witness his misery became overpowering. But a letter to Betty must be written first. He crossed to his desk, where Betty's face smiled out of a silver frame. Gazing at this, he became so absorbed that three sharp taps on the door were unheeded. The Bishop of Poplar entered the room, pausing when he saw the head bent over the table, the thin fingers clutching the silver frame. He closed the door, crossed the room, and laid his hand upon Mark's shoulder.

"You are in sore trouble."

Mark started to his feet with an exclamation compounded of fear and surprise.

"You—David——?" he stammered. "What b-brought you here?"

"You shall answer that question yourself," said Ross gravely.

The men confronted each other. Great as the contrast was between the robust health of the one and the infirmity of the other, a critical eye might have detected a similarity in the two faces—a resemblance the stronger because it was born of the spirit rather than the flesh.

"I was crossing Welbeck Street this afternoon," said Ross, "when I saw you leave one of the houses. It was in my mind to follow and speak to you, but I was hastening to an appointment for which I was late, and leaving town for Scotland at eight. But it happened that I had noted the number of the house you were leaving, and I looked it up in a directory on the platform at Euston. Mind you, my train was about to start, and I had taken my ticket, but when I found out that you had seen Drax, I guessed what had happened. I let the train go on without me, and came on here. Was it coincidence that led me into Welbeck Street this afternoon, or something more?"

"I am under sentence of death," said Mark.

"Tell me all about it." He grasped his friend's hand.

Mark obeyed. "She has always cared for me," he concluded, "always, you understand: ever since we were boy and girl. Many want her. Gorgeous insects have buzzed about her, but she flew to a poor drab-coloured moth. And I"—his voice shook—"I had fluttered about in the outer darkness——"

"Was it darkness, Mark?"

"I should have said twilight."

"Then she was your sun?"

Mark paused before he answered slowly: "God made the sun."

"You try to slip by me," replied the other quickly. "Have I misread you? It seemed to me that you had ideals, standards, rules higher than the average, that for you the light shone more clearly, revealing what lay beyond. Was that light the glamour in a woman's eyes?"

"The light was reflected in her eyes. You press me hard, David. Shall I plead that the light, no matter whence its source, dazzled me. There have been times when I seemed to see the other shore: an enchanted land, so desirable that I wondered why men preferred to linger here. But now"—his voice grew harsh and troubled—"I want this earth. I want to live and love here."

"What do you propose to do?" David asked.

"Do?" Mark laughed bitterly. "What can I do but die, the sooner the better? You are a strong man,

David; it is hard for you to stand in my shoes; but if you were I you would surrender."

"What?"

"Shall I say everything?"

"You cannot surrender what you have done already, whether good or ill."

"I have to surrender love," Mark muttered. "What do you know of that, David?"

"I loved a woman," Ross replied, "and I love her still, although she is but a memory"—his voice softened—"a memory of what might have been, and what will be. And shall I say that this love has fortified me, because I see it as the reflection of a greater love? The love you talk of surrendering is an imperishable possession."

Mark said nothing.

Ross continued: "Drax is a great authority, but he does not know, as I know, that you have never given your body a fair chance. Now—my word to you is FIGHT. Fight for life, fight for health, fight to save yourself as you have fought tooth and nail to save others. Again and again I've begged you to go to my lodge in Sutherland. Go there with me to-morrow. Drax prescribes fresh air, plain food, complete rest. These may be straws, but clutch them, clutch them! Why, man, I have towed worse wrecks than you into dry dock, and I've seen 'em sail out of harbour with every stitch of canvas set staunch and seaworthy craft,

Be my guest for six months! Mark, Mark, my dear, good, foolish, gallant Mark—*Fight!*”

“Thank you, David,” Mark replied. Then the smile which Bagshot knew well lit up the thin haggard face, as he added slowly: “I d-d-don’t think it *was* c-c-coin-cidence which led you into Welbeck Street this afternoon.”

“What will you tell Miss Kirtling?”

The abrupt question, to which as yet Mark had found no answer, fell sharply on a silence.

“I d-don’t know,” said Mark.

“Tell her the truth,” Ross advised.

“The truth?” Mark gasped. “Not for anything. She would come to me, she would sacrifice herself to me. I should wreck her life. No, no, David, not the truth.”

“It is always best,” said Ross steadily. “Have you the right to withhold it?”

“I have, I have,” Mark replied vehemently. Ross looked troubled.

“I hesitate to speak, but, Mark, think well before you deny the woman you love what you take yourself.”

“Eh, what do you mean, David?”

“Knowing the facts, you will order your own life according to your lights; let her know the facts and do the same. At any rate, it is understood that you go North with me to-morrow?”

“Yes,” said Mark.

When David had gone, Mark flung himself upon his bed, trying to see clearly the course he ought to pursue. If Betty came to him, would he have strength to send her away? Once she had spoken shudderingly of a friend married to a hopeless invalid: a poor wretch lingering on, half dead, changing day by day into something unrecognisable in mind and body.

In the end, tormented by perplexity, too sick, perhaps, in mind and body to see clearly, he wrote as follows:

"You have the right to demand an explanation, which I must give. I am and shall remain outside that garden into which we strayed last Saturday. What more can I say? Nothing. Try to think of me as a boy who was near and dear to you. . . ."

The letter was filled up with details concerning his work. Reading it, the conclusion was inevitable that the writer had become absorbed in such work. He hinted at the possibility of taking a vow of celibacy.

Betty kissed this letter before she broke the seal, making sure that it was a love-letter. Then she read it, with perceptive faculties blunted by shock. Lady Randolph found her in the Italian garden, staring at the figure of Aphrodite.

"You were right," she exclaimed passionately. "Mark prefers his work to—me."

Lady Randolph kissed her.

"I have been a fool," said Betty, bursting into tears.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ARIADNE IN NAXOS.

LADY RANDOLPH wisely said nothing, but she wrote to Mark. He replied by return of post.

"I love her devotedly, but I have consumption: the result of neglect. Don't let my people know of this. I have told Jim Corrance, no one else. I had the presumption to believe that the sacrifice of the flesh was a sort of burnt-offering to God. The folly of it is hard to bear. Many men here are in a like self-crippled condition, and the doctor in charge, a good sort, makes scathing remarks. David Ross warned me several times; as did his successor at the Mission. Betty must never find out the truth, which I could not withhold from you, my kind friend. You can best serve her and me by finding her a good, faithful husband, such a fellow as Harry Kirtling, or Jim Corrance. . . . She is made for the happiness which marriage brings. I can take comfort in the thought that another may give her what is not mine to offer."

Lady Randolph's eyes were wet, as she locked up this letter. Mark had not mentioned Archie as a possible husband. "That would break his heart," she muttered to herself.

Betty and she returned to London, where, during the month that followed, Betty's simulated high spirits

and inordinate appetite for excitement provoked a warning.

"If you don't bend, you'll break."

"I am broken in pieces, like Humpty-Dumpty, who ought to have been a girl. Men don't break when they tumble off their castle walls. I've stuck myself together, but I'm a cracked vessel."

Lady Randolph wrote a note that evening to Mrs. Corrance. She had faith in the balsamic virtue of the atmosphere in and around King's Charteris, and she knew that Jim spent two days out of each week with his mother. Mrs. Corrance begged Betty to pay her a visit.

"Shall I go?" said Betty.

"I need a rest-cure," Lady Randolph replied pointedly.

So Betty went down into the pleasant Slowshire country, where the warmth of her welcome gave the girl a curious thrill. The kisses of the gentle, grey-haired woman sounded deeps, although they could not touch bottom, for the motherless girl has deeps unplumbed by any fellow-creature. Tea was set out in the pretty old-fashioned drawing-room with its freshly calendered chintzes, its quaint Chelsea figures, its simple dignity of expression. Mrs. Corrance possessed some Queen Anne silver, which she had used daily ever since Betty could remember anything. It sparkled softly

like the rings upon the white hands that touched it, shining with a subdued radiance of other days. Betty saw the same quiet glow in her old friend's kind eyes: the peace on the face of age which passes the understanding of youth.

Hitherto she had regarded Mrs. Corrance with grateful affection, but as one to whom the wind had been tempered, one who lived in a fold seeing little beyond save Jim. Betty had always thought of her as mother. Now, she found herself wondering what part this quiet lady had played as sweetheart and wife. Tempests might have raged and died down, before she (Betty) was born. Mrs. Corrance's mind, like her house, was full of charming nooks, cosy corners, so to speak, wherein a tired spirit might take his ease, but perhaps there were also bare chambers into which none was allowed to enter. Into these, if they existed, Betty felt a shameful curiosity to go.

While they drank tea Mrs. Corrance asked no questions. Betty listened with interest to an account of Jim and his doings in the markets of the world.

"He would like to install me, me, my dear, in a fine house in some fashionable quarter." She laughed, and Betty laughed too, seeing the mother delighted that her son should desire to lavish his wealth upon her.

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"Do you despise the world, that you live out of it always?" said Betty.

"I love the country," replied the elder woman evasively; then she added, as if the possibility had just occurred to her: "I hope you won't find it very dull here."

"Not with you," said Betty, slipping her hand into her friend's.

Next day, Mrs. Samphire drove over from Pitt Hall. She looked pinker and plumper than ever, and her hair, arranged in Madonna bands, gave her the vacuous expression of a stout Dutch doll. When the name was announced, Betty rose to fly, but Mrs. Corrance entreated her to remain. While Betty was hesitating, fearing the voluble tongue of Mark's stepmother, the lady herself bustled across the lawn to the chestnut-tree beneath which Mrs. Corrance was sitting. In a moment the pleasant silences were shattered.

"How cool you look! And this is dear Betty Kirtling. We never expected to have the honour of seeing so smart a lady in our humdrum circles. Thank you, my poor husband is only so-so. The doctor has prescribed golf. We have laid out a small links in the park. I think golf such a charming game, don't you? I love to look on at it. You agree with me, I'm sure."

Mrs. Corrance tried to lift this interjectional babble out of the rut.

"I suppose," she said reflectively, "that with us middle-aged women looking on at games is an inherited instinct. We have always looked on, haven't we? But Betty, I expect, likes to play golf."

Betty, however, unkindly said nothing, while Mrs. Samphire bleated: "Oh, yes, I do like to see the Squire play golf. Although, when he misses the ball, he does—well, I mustn't tell tales out of school, must I? How is dear Lady Randolph? Did you have a large party for Ascot? Was the Prince there? I have seen your name in the Marlborough House lists. Really, I wonder you speak to me at all."

"I haven't said much yet, have I?" said Betty. "Last time we met you were suffering horribly with neuralgia. Is it better?"

"I'm a martyr now to dyspepsia. I'm trying electric homœopathy, you know. If your poor, dear uncle were alive, how interested he would be."

"I never heard of it," ejaculated Mrs. Corrance.

"I want Mark to try it. He has had a sort of breakdown."

"A breakdown?" exclaimed Betty. "Did you say a breakdown?"

Light flashed upon her. Why had she not thought of this? Her thoughts crowding together clamoured so shrilly that she could barely hear Mrs. Samphire's querulous reply.

"We learned, quite by chance, that he was in a sanatorium in Sutherland. He ought to have come to Pitt Hall."

"Have you asked him?" said Betty in a low voice.

"He would come to us if he wanted us."

Shortly after Mrs. Samphire took her leave.

"Can Mark be seriously ill?" said Betty.

Mrs. Corrance's clear eyes lingered for a moment on Betty's flushed cheeks; then she said tranquilly: "It is not impossible. If so, I don't blame him for going to Scotland."

"He ought to be at Pitt Hall," said Betty. "I think I shall take a brisk walk."

Two days later Betty met the Squire in Westchester. She soon discovered that he was hurt because his son had not come home.

"Perhaps he was anxious to spare you—and others. That would be like him."

"Yes, yes; he's the best boy in the world. But I'm sure there's nothing serious the matter. We Samphires are as hard as nails."

"If he died up there without making a sign."

The Squire stuttered and choked.

"God bless me! you alarm me. I must write at once. I shall insist on his coming home. Has he taken you into his confidence, my dear?"

"No."

"Um! I thought once that—well, I shall write."

Betty felt that her heart was beating.

"He will pay no attention to a letter. Why not go to him yourself, Mr. Samphire?"

"By God!—I will."

Betty smiled faintly, for the Squire, when he set his mind to a thing, was not easily turned aside.

Then she went her way; and Mrs. Corrance noted in her diary that Betty seemed quieter, more like her old self.

On the following Saturday Jim arrived from town, exhaling and exuding Capel Court. He strolled with Betty through lanes, where they had picked primroses and blackberries long ago; and the familiar trees and hedgerows stood like sentinels of the past, guarding simple joys, which Betty told herself could never return. Jim reminded her that a missel-thrush had built in the old pollard close to the village pound, and that the eggs, when about to be blown, proved addled.

"You were very keen about eggs," she said.

"I've always been keen," said Jim. "By Jove!—it was a sell about those eggs. Well—I still collect eggs, and some are addled! That Cornucopia mine, for instance. . . ."

He plunged into a description of a mining deal which had proved disastrous.

"But I got it back, and a lot more in six weeks."

"Which excites you most—winning or losing, Jim?"

"One gets accustomed to winning," said the successful speculator, "but losing is heart-breaking, particularly when you are unable to guess what the loss will be."

"Ah," said Betty. "What do you do with your gains?"

"Let 'em increase and multiply. The mater won't live in a better house, I mean a larger, and she refuses, in advance, all the presents that I've not given her." He laughed, then he continued in a hard voice: "That question of loss interests me."

He looked at Betty, who slightly lowered her parasol and made no reply.

"I never forget my losses."

"Because they have been few?"

"Because they have been heavy. The fellows in our market would tell you that I have a very serious failing: I don't know when to let go."

"I call that a virtue: in a word, you don't know when you're beat."

"No," he said steadily. "I don't know when I'm beat."

A silence followed, during which the tamer of bulls and bears decapitated a few dandelions. Betty watched him out of the corner of her eye. A certain dexterity and ruthlessness in Jim's use of his cane had significance. Then she found herself wondering what Jim looked like when he was a boy. She could not recall her old playmate, being obsessed for the moment by the man beside her. Some men always retain the look of youth—Mark was one of these; others would seem to have been born old; many, like Jim Corrance, assume early a hard and impenetrable crust of middle age. Jim's face was thin and lined, although he had the square figure of an athlete. One could not picture him as a rosy-cheeked urchin, nor could one believe that he would grow feeble, and bent, and white-haired. And yet, despite his strength and success, Betty felt poignantly sorry for him. And being a woman she showed her compassion in a score of inflections, gestures, which were as spikenard to the man who loved her.

"I wonder you are so nice to me," he said presently; then as she raised her delicate brows he added quickly: "I've cut loose from so much you revere. It's a pill for the mater, but I couldn't play the humbug. I look at life as it is: as it appears, I mean, to me—a place where the devil takes the hindmost."

"And those in front——"

"Oh—I daresay the devil takes them also—later."

Betty changed the subject, not because it was distasteful, but for the subtler reason that she feared her own thoughts, which stuck in a slough of despond. For the rest of the walk they prattled gaily enough of the pranks they had played as boy and girl. Jim's face insensibly softened, so that Betty caught a glimpse of the Harrovian. Then, at the mention of Archie's name, the talk flowed back into the present.

"I never asked you what you thought of that wonderful sermon of his."

Jim admitted surprise. "Old Archie has come on," he added. "He's a plodder, and he's good to look at, and he means to 'get there.'"

"To get where?"

"To the bench of bishops."

"I used to underrate Archie, but there's a lot in him."

"A lot of him, too. Oh, you needn't frown, Betty. I think that Archie makes a capital parson; and I daresay he'll personally conduct a select party of you Slowshire people to heaven."

"How bitter you are, Jim."

"I won't be bitter when I'm with you," he promised. "I say, there's the bush where we caught the Duke of Burgundy fritillary. I saw it in the old cabinet

the other day. You nailed it with your hat and gave it to me, although you wanted it yourself. I felt a beast for taking it, but I adored you for being so unselfish."

"You offered me your Purple Emperor next day."

"And you refused it," said Jim quickly.

"So I did. I must tell everybody that I have refused an Emperor."

"Not to mention smaller fry. Three months ago I thought you meant to marry Harry Kirtling, and he thought so too, by Jove!"

"You dare to insinuate that I encouraged him?"

"You have a way with you, Betty." He glanced at her ardently, but she looked down, faintly blushing, as he continued: "You are not one of these modern young women who can stand alone."

"That is true," she said simply. "I am not strong enough to stand alone, and I admire in men the qualities lacking in myself. We had better go home; your mother will be waiting for her tea."

Jim went back to town on Monday morning, but he returned to King's Charteris the following Friday, and walked once more with Betty in the lovely woods which lie between Westchester and the New Forest. Naturally and by training an acute observer, although a keener judge of men than women, Betty puzzled him. He saw that she was slightly contemptuous of the material

side of life, although willing to listen by the hour to his presentment of it. This, however, might be a phase, a mood. He felt assured, now, that Betty would have married Mark had he asked her to do so, and he lay awake at night wondering whether she would marry anybody else. For the rest he determined that he must make haste slowly. He would give the girl the fellowship she craved without defining its elements. That she was grateful for such abstinence her manner proved. She became at once open, candid, a delightful companion.

Meantime the Squire had not left Pitt Hall. When he met Betty, he said, with some confusion, that the "Madam" (as he called Mrs. Samphire) had opposed so long a journey; one, moreover, which was like to prove a fool's errand. He excused himself by complaining querulously of an estate which exacted constant supervision. His face was even more florid than usual, and his manner less complacent. When Betty mentioned this to Archie (who rode over from Westchester on a well-bred cob), he expressed a fear that his father was losing money.

"He spoke of going North," Betty said, after a pause. "If Mark is really ill, surely he ought to be nursed by—by his nearest and dearest?"

Archie betrayed astonishment.

"Ill? Really ill? I've heard nothing of serious illness, not a word. How do you know, Betty?"

"I have guessed," she answered vehemently. "He has slipped away to—to *die*, perhaps!"

Archie showed a most lively concern.

"No, no, you exaggerate. Look here, Betty, if someone ought to go North, I'll go."

"Oh, Archie, if you would."

"Dear old Mark! Of course I'll go. It happens that I can get a week's leave. I'll bring him home with me."

He spoke in a warm, sympathetic tone, kindling Betty's gratitude and affection. Never had she liked Mark's brother so well.

"You can spare the time, Archie?"

"Yes, yes; I'm so glad you spoke to me. By the way, I've a piece of news for you, great news, too. I am commanded to preach at Windsor."

"Oh, Archie, I *am* pleased to hear that. It will mean so much, won't it."

"Yes."

She asked questions: Was the date set? Had he a theme? and so forth. "You know," she continued gravely, "I shall never forget your Westchester sermon. Many sermons touch one, but that gripped. Often, I've not been quite fair to you, and now I'm horribly ashamed of myself. You forgive me?"

"My dear Betty! I say, was there so great a difference between that sermon and others I have preached?"

"Why, Archie, how modest you are! Don't you know that you climbed to the heights that Whit-Sunday? Before, you seemed to be rambling about on the comfortable plains. Oh, I know we can't scale mountains every day. Lord Randolph said as much——" She paused.

"What did Lord Randolph say?"

"He did not intend that it should reach your ears."

"Betty, you will do me a favour by repeating what he said as he said it. I am not thin-skinned."

"Well, he said that beer was good liquor, and that spirits should be used sparingly. You couldn't preach such a sermon as that every Sunday."

"Not I," said Archie.

"The great thing is that you can stir up hearts when the occasion comes. I feel sure you will surpass yourself at Windsor."

"I wish *I* felt sure, Betty. Well—I'll do my best to persuade Mark to return with me, but he's obstinate as a mule where his health is concerned. Shall I give him any message from you?"

"You can give him—my love."

She spoke with assumed lightness of tone. Archie found a phrase.

"A man would travel farther than Sutherland to receive that." Then he took his leave, gravely smiling.

"He's a good sort," said Betty.

None the less she told herself that her intuitions in regard to men were fluid. Again and again she tried to grasp them, to mould them into permanent form, into definiteness; always they flowed away—peaceably sometimes, with a sweet melodic cadence, as of a Scotch burn, but more often roaring, like the same burn in spate; in either case leaving but a small silt behind.

The two days following Archie's departure she spent alone in the woods (for Mrs. Corrance seldom left her pretty garden), seeking from Nature an answer to the problem in her heart. The great oaks and beeches preserved an inviolate silence in those languorous July days, but the pines seemed to have a message for an attentive ear. Their sighs were, perhaps, the warning voices of the innumerable dead, hushed and (to most mortals) inarticulate. Here and there amidst this rich pastoral country Betty found sterile acres where even the hardy fir failed to find sustenance. These patches in the landscape had a weird fascination. Betty perceived beauty, dignity, in their subtle, faded tints, their delicate greys and shadowy browns. Once upon a time, doubtless, these barren spots had bloomed, too luxuriantly, perhaps; in due time they would bloom

again in splendid resurrection. In the centre of one of the stony places a young birch tree of great beauty stretched slender limbs toward the green paradise which encompassed it, inclining slightly to the south.

"I am like that birch," said Betty.

CHAPTER XIX.

A SANATORIUM IN SUTHERLAND.

ARCHIBALD SAMPHIRE took with him to Scotland a small portmanteau and a handbag. After leaving Perth, where he made an early breakfast, he opened the bag and pulled out a roll of foolscap covered with neat, scholarly handwriting. The reading of this MS. seemed to give him pleasure; but presently his fine brow puckered into wrinkles, and an excellent cigar was allowed to go out prematurely.

"It's not as good as I thought," he murmured; and he was not speaking of his cigar.

Presently he lit another cigar and reread the M.S.—the sermon prepared for Royalty. When he wrote it, he told himself it eclipsed the one preached on Whit-Sunday at Westchester. Afterwards, rereading it in cold blood, he had come to the conclusion that it did not quite "grip," as Betty put it, although sound to the core doctrinally, and discreet; better suited, perhaps, for august ears than the other. Now, in this clear, cool northern air, judgment was of a less sanguine complexion. The theme warmed into life in the Close at

Westchester lacked vitality in the Highlands. Mountain and moor made it seem anæmic. Archibald looked out of the window, which was open, and inhaled the fresh, pungent air. Not a house was to be seen, not even a shepherd's hut; the moors spread a purple carpet on which no human creature walked; the mountains, vast, rugged, solitary, encompassed the moors. Yet in the heart of this lonely wilderness men had swarmed together in conflict. These mountains had not barred the progress of an army. Guns, horses, transport waggons had defiled through the passes and across the treacherous peat bogs. That clear burn yonder had run red with blood. Here was fought the battle of Killiecrankie. Archie thought of these things as he sat with the sheets of his sermon in his hand. He bundled the MS. back into his bag, and closed it with a snap, divining his inability to deal adequately with what was primal.

He had wired to Mark that he was coming North; accordingly, at Lairg he found a "machine" awaiting him, a ramshackle cart drawn by a sturdy pony, whose attempts to leave the rough roads and plunge on to the moor indicated that he was more at ease beneath a deer packsaddle than between a pair of shafts. The driver eyed somewhat derisively Archie's clerical garments. "Ye're no a meenister?" he asked; and receiving a reply in the affirmative, added with emphasis,

"Ye're verra young for that." A minute later he asked if his passenger were college-bred.

"I took my degree at Cambridge," said Archie.

"Indeed. A'm interested in the Punic Wars. Yon Scipio Africanus was a gran' man. I'd be obliged if ye'd tell me all ye ken aboot him."

Archie changed from pink to the colour of Turkey twill. What he knew about Scipio Africanus could have been put into a grain of millet seed. In some confusion—not wasted upon the critical Scot—he explained that the Punic Wars were beyond his horizon. The driver nodded compassionately, expressing no surprise at the Sassenach's ignorance. He was thin and angular; his grey eyes had curious flecks of brown in them; his face and hands were very red and hairy, and beneath the red hair Archie detected a certain amount of dirt. This restored the minor canon's sense of superiority. The Scot, however, wore stout homespun and superb stockings.

"You wear good clothes," said Archie.

"D'ye think they're too guid?"

"Certainly not," said Archie hastily. "Your Highland sheep look in fine condition."

Once more the driver's queer eyes met his. The brown flecks danced in the grey.

"They're no mine, and they cam frae Teviotdale—they white-faced sheep." The contempt in the man's voice was unmistakable.

Archie wondered if the man also came from the border; he did not look like a Highlander; Highlanders always said "whateffer." He wished to ask questions about Crask, Ross's lodge, but the brown flecks in the small, closely-set eyes were oddly disconcerting, so he stared at the face of the landscape instead of that of the man. They were driving over a bleak moor which stretched, far as the eye could reach, to some delicately blue hills fringing the western skies. The scene was panoramic and indescribably desolate. Along the road black posts, set at intervals, served as guides to such travellers — shepherds for the most part — who were obliged to cross the moors in winter-time, when snow covered all things. Archie thought of November and shivered. Presently they passed a small slate-tiled cottage built of rough grey stone and surrounded by a grey stone wall. Peats were piled close to a vast midden, on which some hens were scratching; beyond the peat stack stood the byre; garden, ornamental or useful, there was none. As the pony came to a sudden halt, three rough collies rushed out, barking furiously. The driver spoke to them and got down; he strode into the house, remained there ten minutes, and came out wiping his hairy chin. Archie smelled whisky. The driver picked up the reins, the collies barked, the pony shambled forward. Evidently the whisky had had an effect, for the Scot became communicative.

"He's a verra mean man, yon," he said, jerking his head in the direction of the house. "We were tasting the noo, and I said, as he was filling the glass—'Stop!' And wad ye believe it, the brute stoppit?"

Mark would have laughed. Archibald remained calm.

"There's too much whisky drunk in Scotland," he said.

"There's mair drunk oot of it," retorted the driver.

Archie refused to enter into argument, and the driver filled a black cutty with evil-smelling tobacco. After the moor was crossed, the character of the scenery changed. The road wound its way beside a charming burn to which heather-covered hills sloped steeply. Farther on, a loch reflected the saffron splendours of the sky. A splendid mountain—Ben Caryll—towered to the right.

"Yon's the hoose," said the driver.

The house crowned a small spur of Ben Caryll. At one side stood a small wooden chapel embellished by a diminutive bell-tower, in which hung a single bell of great sweetness of tone. A big lawn lay on the other side of the house, and Archie noted with surprise that tennis-courts were marked out. He noted also, with equal surprise, the profusion of flowers and flowering shrubs and the care which allotted to each its particular place in the general plan of the garden. The

house looked grey and grim, like all houses in this part of Scotland, and the windows had been enlarged, giving the building somewhat the appearance of a small factory. Behind the tennis-courts stood a row of rough sheds covered with creepers and facing the south. In the sheds he caught a glimpse of tables, chairs, sofas, and other simple furnishings.

Archie rang the bell, which jangled discordantly. The door was opened by Mark, who held out both hands, smiling. "It's awfully good of you, old fellow," he said. "I don't know how to thank you. You're just in time for supper. Here's the Bishop. He's up for a day or two."

David Ross nodded cordially and gripped Archie's hand. Two men came forward and were introduced. One shouldered the big portmanteau and went upstairs with it, ignoring protests. Archie followed, carrying his small black bag and feeling that he had come on a fool's errand so far as Mark was concerned. Dying? Why, he looked stronger than he had looked for months. As soon as the brothers were alone Archie said as much.

"I suppose it's the air," Mark explained. "I'm out-of-doors night and day. My trouble is scotched."

"I can't understand how you can joke about it," said Archie.

"A vile pun, but irresistible. I say, wash that frown off your face and come down. We'll have a pipe and a good jaw afterwards. If you think, by the way, that I do look better, you might say so to David Ross. He's been awfully kind."

"Why didn't you go home?"

"I c-c-couldn't," said Mark shortly.

In the refectory, a long, low annexe to the house, the Bishop's guests sat at meat. Some of them were ruddy and robust; others looked thin and white, but not one, so Archie remarked, wore the sable of discontent. The eyes that met his were candid and clear—the eyes of men satisfied with their lot in life. At the foot of the table sat a little fellow with a big head, which waggled comically. Archie wondered where he had seen him before; then he remembered. The little man looked like Mr. Pickwick, although he lacked that illustrious character's deportment and dignity.

"Who is that?" he whispered to Mark, who sat beside him.

"That's Stride, our resident doctor."

In those days neither Father Kneippe nor his ideas were famous. The open-air treatment for disease was unknown. Mark explained Stride's methods: his theories on diet and physical culture, facts now familiar to everybody.

"Stride lives here all the year round, you know. David Ross comes and goes at long intervals."

"It must be desolate in winter." Archie gave his impressions, including a description of the house with the huge midden. "It was larger than the cottage," he said in great disgust, "and the drunken savage who drove me wanted to learn what I knew about Scipio Africanus and the Punic wars. Punic wars indeed!"

"I like the country and the people," said Mark, "but you have to climb to get at either."

After supper the guests marched outside and settled themselves in the sheds, which were lit with lamps. Some read, some played chess, some listened to Stride, who talked unceasingly. The Bishop led Archie aside and asked him if he would like to smoke a pipe on the lawn.

"I'll smoke a cigar," said Archie. "Can I offer you one?"

"I prefer a pipe," said the Bishop.

They strolled together onto the lawn. Although it was nearly ten, twilight still lingered about the landscape, as if loath to leave a scene so fair in darkness. Archie listened attentively to what his companion was saying.

"Your brother has neglected his body." (Ross had been warned by Mark to say no more than this.) "In such cases more or less of a breakdown is inevitable.

I am delighted that you see a change for the better. Six months up here, under Stride, may set him up."

"I hoped to take him back with me. I came up for that purpose."

"Your brother can return with you, if he wishes, but would it be wise?"

"Perhaps not, perhaps not," said Archie. "We did not know that you were prepared to offer so generous a hospitality."

"He will be a paying guest in more senses than one. I dare say you would like to talk to him. Good night! I have an immense pile of letters to answer. I hope you will stay with us as long as you please."

He grasped Archie's hand, and strode off. Archie watched him for a moment, enviously. Ross gave the impression of power in action. It was certain that his amazing stride would take him far on any road—and always *upward and onward*: the motto adopted by his followers.

When he found himself alone with Mark, in the bedroom assigned to him, Archie said: "Ross seems to think that you are doing better here than you would, for instance, in Slowshire."

"Why, of course. I'm mending rapidly. One cannot do anything rapidly in Slowshire. It's not even a place to die in. One would dawdle over it."

"You will speak with such levity——"

"I've not your gravity, my dear old fellow. Now then, tell me about yourself. What are you doing?"

"I've been commanded to preach at Windsor."

Mark was so eager and warm in his congratulations that Archie found it easy to go on.

"I've brought my MS. with me. I want you to skim through it."

"I must read it at once. This is wildly exciting."

Archie paced up and down, while Mark sat on the bed reading the sermon. Judging from his face, the fare was proving unpalatable. Archie saw that he was frowning and fidgeting with his fingers, as he used to do at Harrow, when he was looking over his senior's verses. This familiar expression made the big fellow feel ludicrously like a boy. He half shut his eyes and waited for the inevitable: "I say, you know, this is awful bosh," of the Fifth Form days. Mark read the MS. through, and then glanced again at certain passages, before he said a word.

"Well," said Archie nervously, "will it do?"

Mark slid off the bed, put his hands in his pockets, and stared at his brother.

"That depends. It will do to light some fires with; but it won't set the Thames, near Windsor, ablaze."

"Call it 'bosh' and have done with it."

"It's not bosh. You've taken one of the Beatitudes."

"The Dean suggested that. He said it would please. Of course he knows."

"The text is the most inspiring in the New Testament, but you've treated it conventionally. Now look here——" He paused to collect his ideas. Archie saw that his eyes were shining with that suffused light which betokened in him mental or spiritual excitement. He began to pace up and down the narrow room; then he burst out: "You lay stress on the reward hereafter; a hereafter which the finite mind is unable to grasp. *The pure in heart shall see God in His Heaven.* Don't you know that the pure in heart see God here? That He is revealed, and only to the pure, in everything that lies around us. Ah, that is a theme, a celestial theme: the revelation of the Creator in the things created. And impurity blinds us. We look up to God, if we do look up, through a fog. You must take that line, Archie. Burn this—and begin again. And be sure that you define purity of heart aright. Don't confound it with purity of body. You are eloquent on the purity of a child. Why, man, the purity which knows not impurity is emasculate compared with the purity which knows impurity, which has fought with impurity, and yet, in the end, after conflicts innumerable, vanquishes impurity. I tell you that what men and women want to-day is substance. An ideal Heaven, an ideal earth, appeal to us, yes, but they charm as a mirage charms; they melt

and fade as the mirage does. What you have written here," he tapped the foolscap impatiently, "might feed saints, but flesh-and-blood sinners would go empty away. By Heaven! if I had your voice, I would make the sinners hear."

"You must help me," said Archie in a low, hesitating voice.

"Why not?" said Mark excitedly. "Give me the night to think. To-morrow we'll put our heads together and the sparks shall fly. I haven't used my brains for a month. This will do me good."

"Will it?" said Archie doubtfully. Already Mark's face was drawn and haggard; he looked ten years older than his brother.

"What is life," said Mark contemptuously, "if the salt of helping a pal be taken from it? I'm not useless yet. Good night. I sleep in a shed, you know. And I can see the stars whenever I open my eyes."

"It's so cloudy here," said Archibald.

"I can see through most clouds, but s-s-some——" Mark paused abruptly, the light faded in his eyes, as he turned and left the room.

CHAPTER XX.

BETTY SEES A SPRIG OF RUE.

ARCHIBALD returned to Westchester some three days later. In the small black bag was another MS. quite as bulky as the first, and covered with Mark's handwriting. Blots and smudges deformed it; the edges were dog-eared, whole sentences were excised, red pencil marks flamed amidst the black. Yet Archibald read it through again and again, smiling, and nodding his handsome head. He was not alone in his first-class carriage, and his companion, a shrewd Scotch lawyer, guessed why the minister kept moving his lips as he read his MS. In fancy he was declaiming it.

The day after his arrival at the lodge the elder brother had said to Mark: "By the way, Betty Kirtling sent her love to you. Have you any message for her?"

"None," said he slowly. "I hope she is well."

Archie, not detecting the anxiety in his tone, thought Betty was looking very well. Then he mentioned Jim.

"He comes from Friday to Monday, every week. He wants Betty, but I don't fancy he'll get her."

"Have you any reason for saying that?" Mark asked, wondering whether Archie was clearer-sighted than he had supposed.

"Jim is a materialist."

"Oh, come now!"

"A money-grubber and an agnostic."

"One of the best of fellows. Ross never appeals to him in vain."

"Betty ought to marry somebody very different."

"Don't abuse him to Betty."

"Betty is rather undisciplined."

"You can say that of all of us. I hope to God she won't marry a martinet." He glanced at his brother with an eye that flamed. He had been smitten by the fear that Betty might marry Archie.

"What strong expressions you use, Mark. It doesn't sound quite—how shall I put it?—well, *seemly*, for a man who holds Orders. I see no chance of Betty marrying a martinet. I have great hopes that she will choose wisely. She said 'No' to Harry Kirtling, and she will say 'No' to Jim Corrance."

"And she said 'No' to you," Mark reflected.

Within the week Archibald rode over to King's Charteris, where he found Betty in Mrs. Corrance's garden gathering roses. He had wired that he was returning without Mark. She took the telegram to her room, where pride dried her eyes and hardened her heart. That night Jim told himself he had a chance. She had never been so kind to him, so understanding, so alluring. But on the brink of declaration he hesitated, fearing to leap. Afterwards he wondered what might have happened if he had leaped boldly instead of looking and longing.

Betty received Archie with the question, "Is Mark really ill?"

Archie hesitated.

"He looks stronger," he said slowly. "And he is in his usual spirits: the life and soul of the place. There can't be anything really wrong. In fact he joked about his health. He doesn't take anything very seriously, you know. David Ross told me that he had overworked himself more or less."

"You gave him my love?" Betty murmured lightly. She had the faintest tinge of colour in her cheeks, but her voice was almost cold.

"Yes."

"And I hope he sent a nice message to me in return?"

"No. He asked if you were well. I said—yes. You do look uncommonly well, Betty."

She wore white, which set off the delicate tints and admirable texture of her skin, but her hat was black, giving a necessary note of contrast. At her throat, holding together a *jabot* of creamy laces, sparkled an old-fashioned enamel ornament set with tiny brilliants. Standing on the sloping lawn, her figure defined against a towering yew fence, and holding in her hand the roses she had just gathered, the girl made a picture which lured Archie's thoughts even from Windsor.

"I suppose a country life agrees with me."

"You are wonderful."

She moved to a bench, the young man following her with eager feet and eyes. He could not see that her heart was beating, nor did he notice that the brilliancy of her eyes was due to an abnormal enlargement of the pupil. She sat down, smiling derisively. Then she bade him tell her about the sanatorium. When he had finished, she said quietly, "You were very, very kind to take that long journey."

"It's easy to be kind to people like you and Mark."

His delightful voice softened, because when he mentioned his brother's name the memory of what that brother had done on his behalf filled him with gratitude.

"I hear you are kind to everybody. All Slowshire sings your praises."

Archibald shook his head, wondering whether Betty would mention the sermon. He was burning with impatience to try on, so to speak, some of its phrases, to watch the effect of them on a woman who had listened to the Gamaliels of the day. Betty possessed sincerity, imagination, sympathy. These would flow freely at the touch of a friend's hand.

"If it would not bore you," he said, "I should like to talk over the Windsor sermon. You can help me——"

"I? Help you?"

"You can, indeed;" his voice grew eager. "Whatever I say will be the fresher and purer if it passes through your mind before it is given to the world."

"My mind *is* a sort of filter." She laughed. None the less she was pleased and flattered. Archibald began to speak in a soft monotone. Betty half closed her eyes and the lines of her figure slightly relaxed beneath the caressing inflections of the speaker's voice. Whenever Archie sang she was affected in the same way. A languor overcame her. For the moment she was not attempting to grasp the meaning of his words, which, even as inarticulate sounds, possessed value and significance. But, soon, she opened her eyes wide and sat up. By

this time Archie was at the core of his theme, and his treatment of it was so masterly that Betty found herself thrilling with surprise and delight. A few minutes before life had seemed empty. Now it was full again, brimming over, bubbling, with possibilities swelling from shadow into substance. Archie, be it remembered, was not preaching the sermon. He was rather submitting the material, the tissues, the threads, the patterns, out of which a fine piece of work had been already fashioned. Now and again Betty was invited to choose, to select, out of these wares some one which pleased her fancy. She realised that Archie had more of Mark in him than she had deemed possible. Once or twice she seemed to hear Mark's eager tones.

"You say that like Mark."

"Has Mark talked to you on this theme?"

"Oh, no," Betty replied, "but he pours out his ideas, as you do."

"Mark and I have talked about this. He helped me. He always does."

Archie spoke hesitatingly, on the edge of full confession. He had a genuine desire to tell Betty the truth. The words formed on his lips.

"Yes, yes," said Betty absently. "Mark has helped me too, many a time; but he's in Sutherland." Her voice became cold as she recalled his letter. "I feel as

if he were at the North Pole. Well, Archie, I've enjoyed our talk immensely."

"And when may I come to talk to you again?"

"You are not going now?"

The "now" brought a sparkle to his eyes.

"I must. I'm one of the busiest men in Westchester."

"I shall run down to Windsor to hear your sermon," she said.

"Our sermon, Betty."

"That's rubbish. You must never pay me compliments, Archie. I couldn't stand them from you——" she broke off, irrelevantly: "How did you attain to your pinnacle? I suppose you've been climbing ever since we were children. It's quite wonderful. Don't come Friday or Saturday. Jim will be here. Poor, rich Jim! What do you think of Jim?"

Archie remembered, in the nick of time, what Mark had said about not abusing Jim.

"I think what you think," he said slowly. "Poor, rich Jim!"

After he had gone, Betty picked no more roses, but sat down on the bench, feeling rather forlorn. Archibald had taken something away with him. What it was she could not define precisely. For instance—was it Jim's character? He had said nothing. Nothing—except her own words: "Poor, rich Jim." Jim had been his friend, although the men had now little in common. Of

course, he would not speak unkindly of an old school-fellow. Yet as a preacher of Christ's gospel, he must in his heart rank Jim amongst Christ's enemies. Jim was not with Christ. He did not believe in Christ. The conclusion was obvious: he must be counted as an enemy. An enemy? Poor Jim!

She was still thinking of Jim, when his mother came towards her. She seemed to ascend the grass slope with difficulty; so Betty ran forward to offer an arm, which was accepted. As they moved slowly on, Betty glanced at the quiet face so near her own. Again, curiosity devoured her. She observed a faded look which she tried to interpret. Did it spell disappointment? Were the last draughts of life proving bitter? Perhaps she felt that her work was done, that her little world would wag on without her. They sat down, and Mrs. Corrance produced her needle, her silks, and a piece of embroidery from the old-fashioned velvet bag, which she always carried on her arm. Betty, who never sewed, wondered if the day would ever dawn when she would find solace in such trivial occupations. Then Mrs. Corrance asked for news of Mark. After that was told, silence fell on both: the silence which precedes the breaking of barriers. Then Betty said softly: "Are you glad that you have lived or sorry?"

The frail hands, poised above the delicate embroidery, sank upon it, and remained still, while faint

lines of interrogation puckered the placid forehead. Betty continued: "I ought not to ask such questions. I rush in like a fool. But then I am a fool, although I long to be wise. There is so much a girl like me wants to know, but if you tell me to hold my tongue I shall not be surprised or offended."

"I'm glad that I have lived, Betty."

"That is because you have loved. Your love for Jim has filled your life, ever since I have known you. If—if—oh, I am ashamed to put it so brutally—but if you lost Jim, or if Jim had never been born, what then?"

"My dear, you press me too hard. I can hardly conceive of life without Jim," she smiled. "He came when all was dark, and there has been light for me ever since."

"When all was dark——" repeated Betty. She knew that Jim's father had died when Jim was a small boy.

"Yes. My married life was not happy. Perhaps I expected too much, as is the way with women; perhaps it was not meant that I should be happy."

"Not *meant*?" Betty spoke with impatience. "Surely the design, the intention, includes happiness, only we mar it."

"All young people think that," said Mrs. Corrance, "but as we grow older we see so little real happiness

that we must believe, if we believe in the mercy of God, that, save for the few, happiness on earth is not to be enjoyed but earned rather, so that it may be enjoyed, without alloy, hereafter. And I believe that to everyone a glimpse of happiness is vouchsafed. Were it not for that, how many would struggle on?"

Betty asked no more questions. The youth in her rebelled against this placid acceptance of suffering and strife. She told herself that she had enormous capacity for enjoyment. Politics, literature, history, sport: all were fish to her net. But religion, and in particular that concrete presentation of it by the Church of England, had, so far, left her cold. She seemed to have touched but its phylacteries, out of which came no virtue. She had met many clever men who confessed themselves agnostic. Her kind friend, Lady Randolph, never spoke of religion, either in its wide or narrow sense. Certainly she did her duty without aid or formulæ. In fact, when Betty came to think of it, some freethinkers of her acquaintance lived more Christian lives than many Church-people who took the Sacrament every Sunday. This was puzzling. On the other hand, the life she had led since the Admiral's death, the life of Mayfair, of big country houses, of race-meetings, of perpetual pleasure-seekings, had begun to pall. The grandmothers—some of them—who gambled, and made love, and over-ate themselves, revolted her. That they

were at heart discontented and unhappy she could not doubt. Finally, she had just come to the trite conclusion that, in or out of the fashionable world, the people least to be pitied were those who had some definite object in view. Politics, for instance, had probably saved Lord Randolph from the hereditary curse of his family; fox-hunting made Harry Kirtling ride straight and walk straight; Jim Corrance admitted that money-grubbing kept him out of mischief. These pursuits, however, led to negative results: being preventive of evil, not productive of good, except indirectly. Mark Samphire not only avoided evil, but did good, as dozens were eager to testify, including herself. When with Mark she had always been conscious of his power to bring out the good in her. And this afternoon, listening to Archie, she had felt the same thrill, the same irresistible yearning to ascend, to scale the heights. None the less, she was whimsically aware, being a creature of sense as well as sensibility, that Mark cast a glamour. She loved him, and, loving him, loved what he loved, tried to see Heaven's wares with his eyes, and succeeded, so long as the magician remained at her side. When he was at work in Whitechapel and she was shopping in Bond Street, Heaven, somehow, seemed distant. At such times she looked at a set of sables or a diamond ornament with a pleasure which proved that the clay within her was very far from being purged.

Upon the following Saturday, when Jim asked her to become his wife, to share the fortune which would be no fortune without her, she said No, as kindly as words and looks could say it. Her distress at the pain she inflicted touched him profoundly.

"I shall remain your pal, Betty," Jim declared. "The other thing was always a forlorn hope. Is it any use saying that I have known for years that I wasn't first, and that I was sanguine enough to believe that if the first failed, I might be second? Isn't half a loaf better than no bread, dear?"

She let him take her hand, but she turned aside eyes full of tears.

"We'll go on as before. The mater needn't know—eh? It has been a great thing for her having you here."

"And a great thing for me," said Betty unsteadily. "I wish I could marry you, dear old Jim, but I can't, I can't."

She broke down, sobbing bitterly. Jim patted her hand, wondering what he could say to comfort her, but the words which came into his head seemed inadequate. If he had taken her face between his strong hands, kissed away her tears, and sworn passionately that he would love and cherish her so long as she lived, she might have changed a mind which was less strong than her body. While she sat weeping beside him, she was

thinking not so much that she had lost Mark, but that she had lost love. The woman within her groaned, the flesh and blood protested. She saw herself as in a vision, treading the dreary years alone, with no strong arm to protect and defend, with no tiny hands to cling to and caress her. And at the end of the pilgrimage stood old age, grim and grey, carrying a sprig of rue in palsied shrivelled hands.

CHAPTER XXI.

RECUPERATION.

MARK went North with David Ross convinced that his months, if not his days, were numbered; but as time passed, this conviction passed with it, and hope once more fluttered into his heart. Stride took extraordinary interest in his case.

"You must become an animal and remain an animal till I give you leave to assume again the man," he told Mark after Archibald had left Crask. "I don't know what you and your brother have been up to, but you've had a relapse. You must go on all-fours till I tell you to walk upright."

Mark promised, but he added: "I feel an animal, an ass!"

Stride growled out something about dead lions, and set Mark to work in the garden, bare-legged and bare-headed. The work was light, but it strained every muscle in Mark's body. Then he was made to lie down in one of the sheds. After such rest came refreshment: easily digested, nourishing food, taken in small quantities, but often. During this month Mark reckoned

that he was sleeping fourteen hours out of the twenty-four. At the end of each week Stride weighed him and applied a number of tests to determine what strength he had gained. There was a sort of rivalry between the patients. Dick who had gained two pounds crowed over Tom who had gained one. Into this competition Mark entered with boyish keenness. Stride said he was the star pupil of the class.

By the beginning of October, a radical improvement had taken place. The cold weather set in sharply, but Mark, always susceptible to atmospheric change, braved the frosty nights with impunity, sleeping in the sheds with the winds howling about him. He had the confidence in Stride that a well-trained dog has in his master. Some of Stride's "animals"—as he called them—proved at first unmanageable. Coming, as most of them did, from the strenuous life of crowded cities, accustomed to and yearning for the stimulus of constant mental action, such stagnation as Stride enforced seemed insupportable. These kittle cattle were yoked for a season with Mark.

Meantime he had received many letters from his friends, but none from Betty, who had returned to Lady Randolph. Jim wrote that he had been rejected, but made no mention of Archibald, who was often seen crossing the downs between Westchester and Birr Wood.

As a matter of fact, Jim was not aware of these rides. He remained in London, making money. From Pynsent Mark learned of the enthusiasm aroused by Archibald's Windsor sermon.

"Reading in the paper" (he wrote) "that your brother was preaching, I went down to Windsor yesterday to hear him. He is quite amazing. What he said and the way he said it took us by storm. The Whitsuntide sermon gave only a taste of his quality. Out of the pulpit he has always struck me as being the typical English parson of means and position; in it he is *apostolic*! I can find no other adjective to describe his persuasiveness, sincerity, and power. Lord Randolph tells me that it made a profound impression in the highest quarter. I saw Betty Kirtling and Lady Randolph. . . ."

Mark thrust the letter into his pocket with an exclamation which made the man working next to him raise his brows.

"Anything wrong, Samphire? No bad news, I hope?"

Mark blurted out the truth. His companion, broken down by hard work in Manchester, had sympathetic eyes and lips which dropped compassion upon all infirmities save his own.

"I've had good news, Maitland: my brother has preached an eloquent sermon at Windsor, and—and there *is* something wrong with me. I have the damnable wish that he'd failed, as I failed." Then he laughed harshly, bending down to pick up his spade.

That afternoon he climbed the mountain, which sloped steeply to the loch. The air, he felt, on the top of Ben Caryl would purge and purify; the panoramic view would enlarge the circle of his sympathies. And so it proved, although a materialist might assign another cause. When Mark reached the highest peak he became aware that he had accomplished a feat of physical endurance beyond such powers as he possessed two months before. He was not aware of undue fatigue; on the contrary, a strange exhilaration permeated mind and body. He could have danced, but he sat down, soberly enough, and reread Pynsent's letter. When he had done this, he tried to transport himself to Windsor. But fancy left him in Sutherland. He gazed upon moor and mountain whitened here and there by snow. He looked into the pale, luminous skies above, into the frosty opalescent mists to the westward, through which the sun glowed like a red-hot ball, and wherever he looked Betty was not. For the moment he could not recall her face. It seemed as if he were seeking a stranger with a written description of her in his hand.

Sitting there, some voice whispered to him that Betty wanted him, that he must descend the mountain and go to her. Then he told himself that he was mad. If he obeyed this beguiling voice in his ears, if he went south—what then? The hope in his eye and heart

would kindle like hope in her, and such hope was a will-o'-the-wisp flickering above a grave!

When he came down from the mountain, he found Stride busy in his laboratory. Stride possessed a magnificent Zeiss microscope and all the accessories—incubating ovens, sterilising apparatus, stains, and reagents—for the highest bacteriological work. Of late, Mark had given the little man some help in staining and mounting preparations.

“We are out of one world,” Stride had said, “but I will introduce you to another through an apochromatic lens. You will find yourself quite at home, my friend. Here, in this drop of water, you will note the same struggle for existence, the same old game as it is played in Whitechapel or Whitehall.”

When Mark began to understand something of the technique of the microscope, when Stride had shown him its uses, for instance, in the analysis of diseased tissue or blood, and revealed its magical powers of diagnosis, Mark asked a question: “How can any doctor work without one?” Stride laughed at such innocence.

“It takes up too much time. No hard-working practitioner ignores the value of it, but he cannot use it. When necessary, he sends preparations to some specialist. A microscope exacts more attention than a

wife. That is why I"—he slapped his chest and winked furiously—"have remained single."

This devotion to his work strengthened the chain which linked patient to doctor. Stride—Mark felt assured—might have secured fame and fortune in London. Yet he chose to remain unknown and poor in Sutherland.

Mark told him that he had climbed Ben Caryll, and felt none the worse for it. Stride shook his big head.

"You oughtn't to attempt such walks yet."

"Then the time *is* coming. I shall regain my health?"

He had never put the question so directly before. Stride eyed him attentively, hearing a new note in his voice.

"Per—haps."

"If I asked for leave of absence——"

"It would be refused peremptorily," said Stride. "Why, man, you'd douse the glim which I've been coaxing into flame all these weeks. What magnet draws you from Crask? A woman?"

"Yes, a woman."

"Oh, these tempestuous petticoats! Now, Samphire, I'm not a fool, and I guessed, when you came here, that you left a girl behind you. You are not engaged to her?"

"No."

"Good! Now, listen to wisdom. If everything goes well with you—if fresh air and simple food and freedom from worry make you whole, you may marry some day—but you'll have to wait a long time, so as to make sure, and even then, after years of comparative health, you may break down again. Will this young lady wait for you indefinitely?"

"I should never ask her to do that."

"Um! I daresay she's flirting with someone at this very minute. Eh? I beg pardon, Samphire. Your goddess, no doubt, is an exception; but few women, if they are women, can get along without a man. And now you must leave me. I'm on the edge of a small discovery. I've done some good work to-day."

"Your good work will tell, Stride."

"What d'ye mean? Recognition? If it comes, so much the better; if it doesn't, I've had 'the joy of the working', eh?"

Next day, a letter from Archibald gave many details. He had enjoyed the honour of meeting his Sovereign, who said gracious things; he had dined with a Cabinet Minister; he had been interviewed at length by a reporter. The letter concluded as follows:

"I cannot doubt that my sphere of influence and activity is about to be enlarged. If so, I shall count upon your help. I am deeply grateful for what you have done already. I recognise in

you, my dear, dear brother, an insight into human life and character wider than my own. You have come into contact with what is primal and elemental: an experience lacking as yet to me. I have spoken of this to all our friends, acknowledging frankly my debt to you. . . ."

Mark's smile, when he read these lines, was not easy to interpret, but the sense that, for a brief hour, he had grugged his own flesh and blood a triumph, made him reply cordially and affectionately. He ended his letter by assuring Archibald that such help as one brother could give another would always be at his disposal.

About this time, feeling stronger day by day, he began to wonder what work he should do in the future. Stride was emphatic that life in the East End would mean a return of his malady. Not being able to preach, a country curacy was unavailable; and in any case Mark told himself that such work would be distasteful. Stride startled him by saying abruptly, "Why don't you write?"

"Eh?"

"It's in you, I'll swear. It would be only a crutch, at first, but you have private means. You can write out-of-doors. You will be your own master. You can take proper care of yourself. . . ." Stride waxed eloquent, and Mark listened with a curious exaltation.

"By Jove!" he said, drawing a deep breath, "I believe I can write."

"Everybody writes nowadays," said Stride, "but I have the feeling that you can write what a lot of us will want to read. Think it over!"

Mark thought it over for a week. Ideas inundated his brain, clamouring for expression. He begged permission to try his hand at a short story: four thousand words. Stride gave a grudging consent.

"Mind you," said he, "you're not fit for any sustained mental exertion, but go ahead, full stream, if you like, and we'll see what will happen."

Mark wrote his story, and submitted both it and himself to the autocrat. This was a week later, and the scales proclaimed a loss of two pounds. Stride pursed up his lips and wagged his big head.

"Back you go to the garden to-morrow," he growled. "I'll read your stuff to-night, and tell you what I think of it. It's almost certain to be rubbish."

In the morning, however, he had nothing but praise for the author, whose mind was by no means as familiar to him as his body. He beamed and gesticulated as if he had discovered a new bacillus. The story was despatched to an editor, Arthur Conquest, whom Stride knew, and Mark was enjoined to think no more about it. Think about it he did, naturally. The possibility of doing good work in a new field filled him once more with the ardours of youth. He told Stride there was a certain inevitableness about his failures. What had

gone before—all trials and disappointments—were part of a writer's equipment. He could not doubt that he had found at last a strong-box, so to speak, for such talents as he possessed. Action had been denied him, articulate speech was not his, the power of putting a noble conception on to canvas he lacked; but he could, he would, he should write according to the truth that was in him, so help him God!

Stride warned him that the odds were greatly against his manuscript being accepted. The editor, however, read the story himself, and promised to publish it. His letter contained a message to Mark.

"Will you tell Mr. Samphire" (wrote Conquest) "that I am going to red-pencil his story, which I take to be a first attempt. He must serve his apprenticeship, which in his case needn't be a long one. I can see that he sets for himself a high standard. If he means business I should advise him to write a novel and burn it. When he comes to town, I hope to make his acquaintance."

"Conquest is cold-blooded," said Stride, "but he has a prescient eye. All the same, if you have business dealings with him, look out! And now, go back to your cabbages."

Mark told Maitland what had passed. Maitland entered with sympathy into his plans, confessing that he had tried writing as a trade.

"Grub Street is a long lane with no turning in it for nine-tenths of the foot passengers. I hope you'll gallop down it, Samphire, not crawl as I did."

Maitland looked, so Mark reflected, as if he had gone afoot down many paths. Failure was branded upon his pale, too narrow face, his stooping shoulders, his large, clumsy hands: all thumbs, and crudely fashioned at that! But Ross, who was no longer at Crask, had told Mark that Maitland filled a very large place in his huge Manchester parish.

"What made you go into the Church?" Mark asked abruptly.

"I had to earn my bread and—scrape; but afterwards——"

"Yes?"

Maitland's dull, sallow complexion seemed to be suffused with a glow. It struck Mark that between his face as he was accustomed to see it and as he saw it now lay the difference between a stage-scene lighted and unlighted.

"Afterwards," said Maitland, "I knew that the choice of my profession had been determined by a Power infinitely greater than my own will. I became a parson from ignoble motives. I was soured, bitter, sick in mind and body, unfit for the duties I undertook. And then suddenly—one hardly likes to talk about it—my eyes were opened. I came into contact with hundreds worse off than myself. Some of them bore their burdens with a patience, a serenity, an unselfishness that were a revelation—to me. And then I realised

that no life is a failure which brightens however faintly the lives of others. Napoleon is the colossal failure of history, because he darkened a continent. I would sooner be a beggar sharing a crust with a child than such as he."

"If you were offered preferment——?"

"I hope to live and die in Manchester."

"You nearly did die. Suppose you were not strong enough to go back? You wince, Maitland. That would try your faith. You have been frank with me; I shall be frank with you. I have always wanted one thing, and because I wanted it so much, I tried to bargain with Heaven. I said, 'You shall do what you like with me, only give me, give me the woman I love!' Well, Heaven seemed to take up the challenge. You know my story. I was defeated again and again. And I said to myself I'll grin and bear it, because she is mine. Ah, if you could see her, Maitland, as I see her, if you knew what I have f-f-felt, when I saw her image f-f-fa—fading——" He paused, overcome by his stammer, controlled it, and continued quietly, "I was told that I must die. Ross found me in despair. I—I do not know, but the river was close at hand, and—perhaps—at any rate he rescued me, brought me here, and now, now, I am beginning to live again. I see God in His Heaven. And I see my angel in mine."

He was so excited that Maitland entreated him to

be calm, introducing, as an anticlimax, the cabbages to be cut and carried in.

Shortly after this Stride allowed him to begin his novel. After the first distress of beginning it became plain that this work agreed with him. Weight and appetite increased as the manuscript grew fat. He was out all weathers, and his face became tanned like that of a North Sea fisherman. Stride rubbed his hands chuckling, whenever he saw him.

During these months Mark told himself that it was impossible for Betty to write to him till he broke the silence which he had imposed. Meanwhile, he heard that Archibald had accepted a London living: St. Anne's in Sloane Street. Mrs. Samphire sent Mark a long cutting from the *Slowshire Chronicle*, a synopsis of his brother's labours in and about Westchester. As secretary, and member of many committees, as a lecturer on Temperance, as a pillar of the Charity Organisation Society, as the first tenor of the Westchester Choral Association, Archibald Samphire had honestly earned the gratitude of the community and the very handsome salver, which embalmed that gratitude in a Latin sentence composed by the Dean. Archibald had been asked to preach four Advent sermons in a famous London Church. Mark suggested a theme, revised the sermons, interpolated a hundred passages, cut and slashed his brother's beautiful MSS., and when the sermons were

preached and attracted the attention of London, wrote a letter of warm congratulation to his "dearest old fellow." He had taken greater pains with these sermons than with his own novel, because—as he put it to himself—he had grudged his brother a triumph which Betty Kirtling had witnessed.

One week after the New Year, he was writing the last lines of his book, when Stride came into the room and flung down a letter in Archibald's handwriting. Mark glanced at it, and at the pile of MS. beside it.

"Is the *magnum opus* done?" said Stride.

"Very nearly," Mark replied.

"Are you going to take Conquest's advice and—burn it?"

"I shall let Conquest see it first," said Mark. He rose from his chair, crossed the room to where Stride was warming his hands at the fire, and laid his hand upon his friend's shoulder. "It's not bad," he said slowly; "I know it's not bad; and I owe it all to you, Stride."

"What is it about?" said Stride, repudiating the debt with a shake of his head. Mark had not shown him any portion of the MS., nor discussed the theme.

"It's the story of a faith that was lost and found," said Mark. "I can say to you that it is part of my own life, red-hot from my heart, the sort of story that

is written once, you understand, and I have the feeling that it could have been written only here, in these solitudes."

"I hope it ends happily," said Stride.

"It ends happily," said Mark, staring at his MS.

Stride filled his pipe and then moved to the door.

"It's going to snow," he said. "We shall have a heavy fall, unless I'm mistaken. It was just such a night as this, last year, when we lost our shepherd on Ben Caryl."

He went out, whistling. The door slammed behind him, and the draught from it fluttered the pages of foolscap lying loose on the table. Mark stared at them, smiling, with such a look on his face as a mother bestows on her first-born, when she is alone with him. Then, still smiling, he picked up his brother's letter and broke the seal, the seal of many quarterings, which Archibald habitually used.

"My dear Mark" (he wrote): "I am the happiest as well as the luckiest of men. Betty Kirtling has promised to become my wife. We shall be married as soon as possible, before I settle down to my new work in London. . . ."

The letter fell from Mark's hands. He bent down, trembling, picked it up, and reread its message. Then, crushing the letter into a ball, he flung it into the fire, and watched it crumble and dissolve into ashes. As the flame licked the white paper, the face that stared

into the fire shrivelled into a caricature of what it had been a few moments before. The lips were drawn back from the teeth in a snarling grin; colour left the cheeks and flared in purple patches upon the brow. The slender limbs shook as with a palsy. . . .

Suddenly, the silence was broken by a laugh: the derisive laugh of the man who knows that his heavens have fallen. The sound of his own laughter seemed to move Mark to action. He seized the manuscript, and thrust it into the flames. When it was destroyed, he laughed again, crossed to the door, opened it, and passed out—still laughing—into the driving wind and rain.

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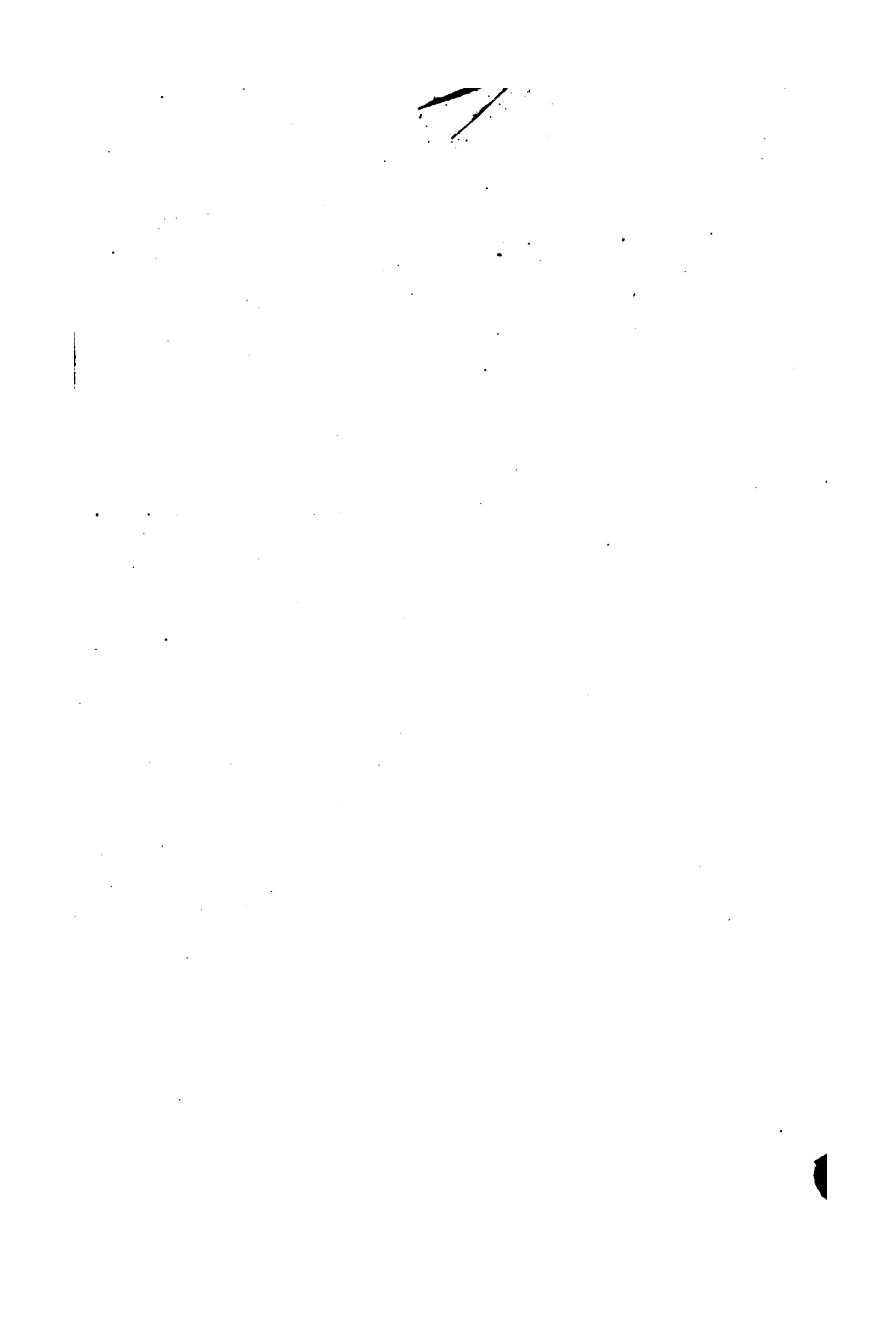
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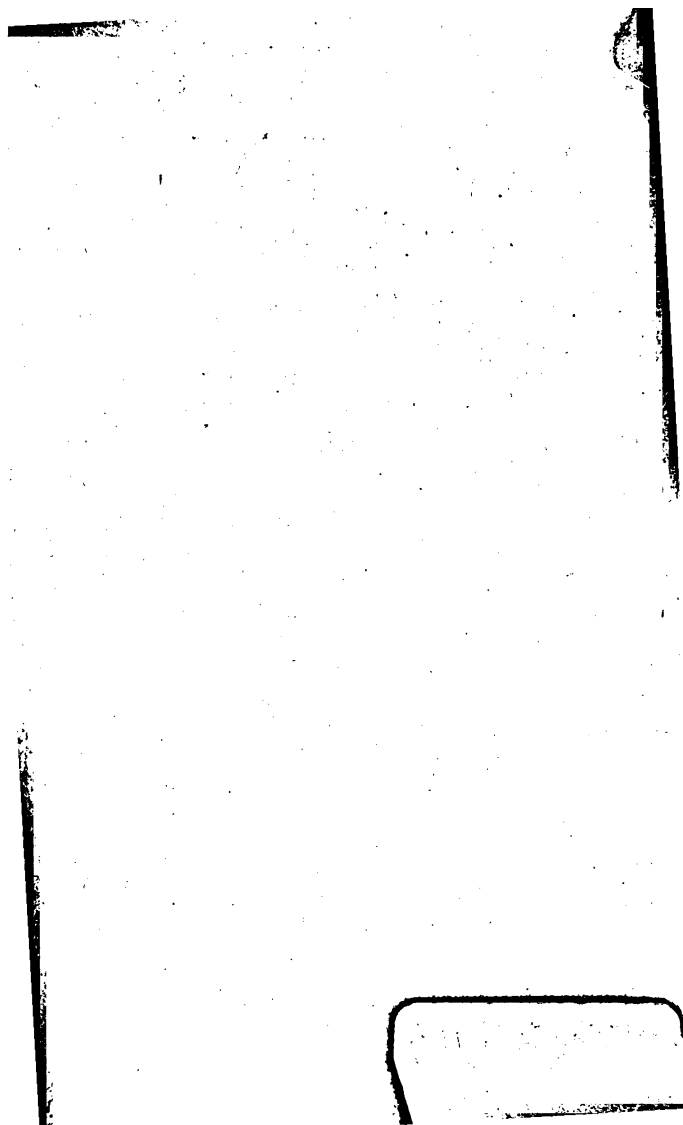


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the 1990s, the number of people with a mental health problem has increased by 50% (Mental Health Foundation 1999). The prevalence of mental health problems has increased in the general population, and the incidence of mental health problems has increased in the prison population.

There is a growing awareness of the need to address the mental health needs of prisoners. The Department of Health (1999) has published a strategy for mental health services, which includes a commitment to improve the mental health of prisoners. The Department of Health (2000) has published a strategy for mental health services, which includes a commitment to improve the mental health of prisoners.

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